

The University of Chicago

TYPES OF RULERS IN THE PLAYS
OF AESCHYLUS

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE DIVISION OF THE HUMANITIES IN
CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF GREEK LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
MARCH, 1941

By
VIRGINIA WOODS CALLAHAN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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PREFACE

During the nineteenth century scholars writing on Greek poetry were concerned chiefly with the mythos as the main productive force. There was a definite tendency to look upon the great poetic creations as more or less spontaneous expressions of the living mythos and to underestimate the active element in the shaping of the mythical material by the poet. These scholars recognized of course that the work of a poet must reflect in some way his own ideas and those of his time and in the works of Aeschylus especially the moral and religious ideas of the period were seen as determining factors. The political aspect of his dramas too was so outspoken that attempts were made to analyze it in the individual tragedies. Since 1833 when Karl Otfried Müller pointed out in his epoch-making edition of the Eumenides the bearing of archaic Greek law upon that play other interpreters have stressed the connection of the dramas with contemporary Athenian democracy. There was, for example, an eager search for allusions to actual events and references to Athenian internal and foreign policy. The living political experience invested in the plays has come more and more to the foreground, but there has been no systematic investigation of all of the tragedies from this specific point of view. The present study is only a part of the general problem of the political aspect in Aeschylean drama. Its purpose is to pursue the influence of the poet's political experience upon the creation of his characters. Many of his leading figures are represented as rulers and a closer inspection of their rôles in each of the extant plays shows that the poet's political knowledge permits him to depict a remarkable variety of types and to portray each of these types with unflinching consistency.

An interpretation which approaches the characters of early Greek tragedy in their concrete political significance is for the modern mind less natural than for the audience of Aeschylus because for the Greeks moral life was political life, and moral virtue political virtue. The Athenian poet knew no separation of these spheres so carefully distinguished in modern thought. If,

in trying to appreciate a great poet, it is necessary to take into account the moral and political ideas of his time, a study of the types of ruler in Aeschylus is a justifiable contribution to the interpretation of his poetry, and every effort must be made to understand the human figures of Aeschylus in the full reality of the meaning which they had for the poet and his contemporaries. There is always the danger of overlooking features which were highly significant for them but which do not have any immediate significance for us. Such an interpretation of Aeschylus' poetry can at the same time contribute something to the history of the age in which the poet lived. Since no contemporary historiography exists to tell us the story of the moving events which helped to mould the Greek view of human life and its problems at that period those political experiences can be reached only in the form in which Aeschylus, the leading poet of his generation, has reproduced them in his tragedies. In this sense the words of Aeschylus offer an opportunity to view from within the history of one of the most revolutionary and significant periods of all time.

The subject of this study was suggested by Professor Werner Jaeger of Harvard University, formerly of the University of Chicago. The writer wants to express her sincere appreciation for his invaluable assistance and generous interest in every phase of the work. She is also grateful to Professor Gertrude Smith of the University of Chicago for her criticism and suggestions.



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CHAPTER I

PELAGUS, THE CONSTITUTIONAL MONARCH

The setting of the Suppliants, the earliest of the extant plays of Aeschylus, is prehistoric Argos. This fact is noteworthy in our investigation of the monarch, Pelasgus, because it suggests the possibility that the tragedian is presenting a picture of the ruler of a somewhat primitive community, antedating the Homeric period, or a king not unlike those in the epics and myths which Aeschylus used as source material for his plays. However, the student of ancient drama knows that in going back to the myth the tragic poet tends to interpret the characters and situations in connection with the problems of his own time. So in this play Aeschylus does not give his audience a photographic copy of a mythological king; he revitalizes the king of the myth by investing him with the characteristics of a contemporary ruler. Furthermore, the Athenian audience was made up of a people newly and increasingly conscious of their own political importance and such an audience was to be satisfied only by a drama in which appeared the reflections of Athenian political theory and governmental organization. Therefore, although Aeschylus uses Homeric scenery proper to an archaic setting, his expressions of ideas and principles of political administration will in general be those of an Athenian citizen of the fifth century. A parallel feature can be observed in the paintings of a later corresponding time: after the Middle Ages the artists saw the ancient stories of the Bible after their own lives and gave their biblical works the appearance of that life; for example, Paolo Veronese presents his figures in a background of Renaissance palaces or churches with the colorful dress and typical features of his own time. The real task of the painter and poet in trying to evoke the story of the myth and to portray it against a background of real life was to make the figures clear and to make their actions understood in terms of contemporary experience.

The king of Argos was an element in the myth; so if Aes-

chylus wanted to dramatize the myth he had to have some experience with great political figures and to be aware of the problems and characteristics of such men. When Aristotle¹ writes that in old tragedy the characters used to speak "politically" whereas in later tragedies they spoke "rhetorically" his reader is not surprised, because he is aware that the atmosphere in which these early plays were produced was primarily political and the tragic poets were themselves typical products of the Greek polis. It is somewhat difficult to make clear what the word "political" means in the Greek sense since its connotation is so much more all-embracing than modern usage implies. To a Greek of the fifth century before Christ the term must have meant everything connected with the polis and that concept would be equivalent to the most comprehensive, responsible and universal aspects of human life. When Aeschylus pictures political persons or conditions it is not with a view to a purely philosophical analysis of forms as such. He is not, like the philosophers, interested in the essence of monarchy but in the man acting in the exceptional position of power, in the monarch who acts in a different sense from ordinary mortals as a man whose every action is important because of the responsibility involved. However, in speaking of the rulers one does not consider them only as representatives of a specific class because for the poet these political persons were at the same time exponents of human faith and action in general and were thought to reveal human problems only in a most concentrated and effective way. Nor is the tragedian a historian, for he does not approach the king from the standpoint of historical tradition. Since the principles which he applies are constitutional and modern he combines or contaminates two things: the mythical idea of a ruler and the constitutional and humanistic ideas of his own period.

The king in the Suppliants is the figure by which the poet develops the problem with which the main actor, the chorus of Danaids, is concerned. The chorus composed of the daughters of Danaus is still the main actor in this oldest Aeschylean tragedy and the form in which this group expresses its feelings and emotions and sets forth its problem lies in various changing lyrical situations. They express hope, fear, confidence, despair according to the changing aspects of the drama, but it is the king

¹Aristotle Poetics vi, 1450 b 7.

of the Argives who, when he comes to see them, serves to develop the action and the underlying problem through his investigation and his legal and religious considerations of the various features of their position. At the same time he brings the problem nearer its practical solution by his own actions and the final decision of the people which he brings about. The king's name, Pelasgus, was given to the poet by epic tradition, but since he was only a genealogical figure and an eponymous hero, as the name itself proves, he had hardly any individuality in the myth, like so many others in the epos. Aeschylus could easily have avoided making him an active person in his drama if he had not needed just such a political leader who, in accordance with the conditions of the archaic age, had to be a king.

The question as to why a king was necessary to accomplish the action of the drama brings us to the actual situation of the play. The Suppliants is different from a modern drama in which moral and psychological questions prevail. The problem of this play is at the same time a human and ethical one and implies concrete legal and political controversies. In the first place, at the time of Aeschylus ethics and law were not as clearly separated as they are now. Secondly, the chorus as the main actor consists of a group of foreign women who have arrived from another country but pretend to be of Greek origin and therefore not only appeal to the human sympathy of the people of Argos, but also claim a right to protection because they say that Argos is the home of their ancestress Io. The Argive princess had been forced to leave her home and city by Hera, who resented the love of her spouse for the maiden. After wandering through many countries she had finally arrived in Egypt, where she gave birth to Epaphus, the son of Zeus, from whom the Danaids claimed descent. However, even though this claim based on their genealogy and origin from the country to which they have turned may appear somewhat controversial the Danaids do have an undisputed claim as suppliants, a claim to which every stranger was entitled in a similar situation even if there were no ties of kinship. So the political situation which arises from their arrival is complicated by a question of sacred law. The king as the representative of political and legal power in the country is thus the natural person to negotiate with the newcomers, to hear their demands, and to act as the leader and counsellor of his people.

The play opens with a magnificent chorus in which the maidens give expression to their fears and hopes in a prayer to Zeus, Epaphus, and the other gods, and explain that they have fled Egypt voluntarily in order to avoid being forced into a marriage with their cousins, the sons of Egyptus. It is most of all the impious violence of their suitors that they are determined to flee.¹ They hope to find a champion in the land of their ancestress who will protect them from this violence, but failing that they are prepared to take their own lives rather than submit to it. The entire opening chorus is a wonderful mixture of intense emotion and religious fervor and is concerned primarily with human tychē.

In order to understand the function of the king in this setting it is necessary to consider the poet's presentation of him in the long dialogue between king and chorus (ll. 234-523).² A short conversation between Danaus and his daughters paves the way for this episode. Near the beginning of that conversation Danaus addresses his daughters and announces the approach of an armed host. He says:

ὄρθ' κόνιν, ἄναυδον ἄγγελον στρατοῦ·
σύριγγες οὐ σιγῶσιν ἄξονήλατοι·
ὄχλον δ' ὀπασπιστήρα καὶ δορυσσοῶν
λεύσσω ξὺν ἵπποις καμπύλοις τ' ὀχήμασιν.
τάχ' ἂν πρὸς ἡμᾶς τῆσδε γῆς ἀρχηγέται
ὀπτήρες εἰέν ἄγγέλων πεπυσμένοι [ll. 180-85].

He continues his speech with an admonition to the maidens in regard to the modesty of their conduct in the presence of the advancing natives. The six lines quoted are a preparation for the entrance of the king and his retinue, and the description of the approaching group is a definite one with its specific mention of shields, spears, horses and chariots, and even the sound of the wheels. Danaus assumes that the leaders of the country to which he and his children have come have learned that there are strangers in the land and are coming to investigate. His first refer-

¹This interpretation of the central problem of the play is defended by H. W. Smyth, Aeschylean Tragedy (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1924), pp. 55-58. He undertakes there to refute the different theories of Bachofen, Ridgeway, and Wilamowitz.

²The line references throughout correspond to the editio maior of Aeschylus by U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Aeschyli tragoediae (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914).

ence to the leader is in the plural and these very words $\tau\eta\sigma\delta\epsilon$ $\gamma\eta\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\tau\alpha\iota$ are taken up by the king in line 251 where Pelasgus says he is $\tau\eta\sigma\delta\epsilon$ $\gamma\eta\varsigma$ $\acute{\alpha}\rho\chi\eta\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\tau\eta\varsigma$.¹ It is possible that the first phrase is a poetic plural. At any rate the passage implies that Danaus considers it proper for the ruler of the country to take charge of an inquiry into the reasons for the presence of strangers within his kingdom.

While the maidens and their father await the coming of the natives they engage in a dialogue which intensifies the religious aspect of their position and foreshadows the seriousness of the problem that the approaching ruler must face. After assuring Danaus that they will heed carefully his good counsel about their behavior the young women follow his advice and draw near to the altar of the local gods; they invoke first of all Zeus their "begetter" ($\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omega\pi$, l. 206) and the bird of Zeus, then "the rays of the sun" and Apollo, a kindred spirit, since he too was once an exile. Danaus points out two other deities of the place to whom they ought to pay homage, Poseidon and Hermes. Each of the gods is called upon in a manner which displays the conviction of righteousness that the suppliants have in their cause, and in the speech immediately preceding the entrance of the king (ll. 222-33) Danaus declares that their enemies have alienated themselves from the gods to such an extent that even the Zeus of the underworld will pass a last judgment on their violence. Clearly then, in their own minds, the ruler of Argos should favor them.

When the king and his attendants appear (l. 234) he addresses his words to the young women and asks in Homeric fashion whence they come. He comments immediately on their foreign attire by which he recognizes that they are not from Argos or any part of Hellas. His attitude is not unfriendly; he wonders at their courage in coming to a strange land without guide, herald or patron, and acknowledging their position as suppliants he waits to hear their story. Evidently the apparel of Pelasgus does not mark him as king. He may have looked like a king and certainly the Danaids expected him to be a leader, but they want to make sure before telling their story. They ask if he is "commoner, spokesman, herald, or ruler of the city" (l. 248). This question gives the king an opportunity to state that he is the "ruler of

¹See Appendix.

the land" and to give his name and lineage. With obvious pride he describes the extent of his realm¹ and even supplies some historical data on the country in which they find themselves. These facts are his tekmeria (l. 271). He thereupon bids the maidens tell of their own background and plight. An official situation has been established, so that from this point on a definite relationship exists between the suppliants and the king. There follows an informatory dialogue in which the king is just the figure required. The investigation has a truly juridical character and the statements all have some legal bearing. The Danaids insist on the validity of their claims and the king on his part demands clear proof of that validity. After he and the chorus reconstruct the story of Io and Zeus and the birth of Epaphus the king acknowledges that the suppliants have a claim on Argos by reason of their descent and proceeds to the immediate inquiry as to why they left their "paternal home" (l. 322) and what fortune has brought them back to the land of their ancestress. From here on as the maidens explain their case the king is in a sense a judge and the scene is juridical rather than emotional or lyrical. Even the terms have definite juridical meanings. At the outset the chorus refers to its "unexpected flight" (ἀνέλπιστον φυγήν, l. 326)² indicating that they realize that their presence is something unusual and contrary to prevailing customs. One of the first and most direct questions asked by the king is whether they left Egypt because of hatred or because their staying would have involved a violation of themis (l. 332). The following lines introduce the dilemma that confronts the ruler. He must be εὐσεβής towards the suppliants who have placed themselves under the protection of the Argive gods, and this eusebeia involves seeing that the Danaids are dealt with justly while they are in his land. On the other hand, the monarch must hesitate to bring war and its

¹It is interesting to note the region ruled over by the king of the Pelasgians although it does not affect the constitutional position of the monarch. J. Vürtheim, Aischylos Schutzflehende (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1928), p. 174, has a long note on the problem of the possibility of a unified state in the Pelasgic time. During the Aeschylean period there was much speculation about the Pelasgic and pre-Hellenic time and certainly Aeschylus was aware of the writings of such men as Hecataeus on such questions.

²Cf. l. 357 and l. 908.

consequent disaster upon his people. The young women appreciate the strength of their position and urge Pelasgus in the best courtroom manner to become the champion of Justice, and they remind him, although he does not need to be reminded, that if justice is not rendered to them both he and his people will have incurred the wrath of Zeus, the god of suppliants. The king acknowledges the power of the gods but expresses his reluctance to bring strife to the state. The entire episode is significant in denoting the position of the ruler both in the mind of the king himself and in the eyes of the maidens; because of its importance it will have to be analyzed in some detail.

What does the king mean when he asks, "How shall I be εὐσεβής towards you?" (l. 336)? What are the responsibilities admitted in that one question? What does eusebeia mean to Aeschylus? The concept contains more than piety or pietas as the ensuing dialogue and the recurrence of the word in the play indicate. The king is thinking of piety in a specific sense, that is, with reference to suppliants and to the god of suppliants. The word is taken up by the Danaids later in the scene (l. 419) where they address Pelasgus: φρόντισον καὶ γενοῦ πανδίκως εὐσεβής πρόξενος. These words contain a direct answer to the first question of the king. From the viewpoint of the Danaids the only way that Pelasgus can respect their rights as suppliants is to protect them from the violence of their cousins and not to stand by and watch them being led away "by force" (l. 430). The question is connected with Dikē and the king must be the champion of Dikē. A fuller analysis of this later passage will be given presently, but it is worth noting here the reappearance of the same word near the end of the play (l. 941). There the king is speaking in a very regal and justly haughty manner to the insolent herald of the Egyptians, and he declares that he can take the Danaids back to the ship with him only if they are perfectly willing to accompany him after they have been persuaded by an "argument that in no way violates their rights as suppliants" (ἄγοις ἄν, εἴπερ εὐσεβής τίθοι λόγος). The verb εὐσεβῶ occurs in line 851, but there is a difficulty of text and variant readings appear.¹

¹According to my observations the term has a juridical meaning in the other cases and I would expect it to have it here. As the line is constructed in the manuscript εὐσεβῶν would go with καί (ε) and the chorus would be meant, but it is difficult

Returning to the scene under consideration, we see that an immediate answer to the king's question is given in the very line which follows it (l. 337), and its simplicity and unhesitating directness is convincing. For the young women, at least, the duty of the king is clear; they answer simply that he can be εὐσεβής "by not handing us over to the sons of Egyptus when they demand it." This is, after all, the answer that the king had already anticipated and feared, as his reaction shows. The cost of eusebeia in this case is war (l. 338); therefore the request of the suppliants is βαρέα. The women are well prepared for such an objection, for they introduce at once the figure of Justice: ἀλλ' ἡ δίκη γε ξυμμάχων ὑπερστατεῖ (l. 339).¹ To this the king replies: εἴπερ γ' ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πραγμάτων κοινωνὸς ἦν (l. 340).² From this line on eusebeia and justice are interchangeable, and it is interesting to observe how persistently justice and reverence for the gods are one and the same. That interrelation is put most concisely in lines 395 and 396:

to see how the chorus needs to be εὐσεβής since it is rather the object of eusebeia. Moreover the corrupted phrase ἀτιέτανα πόλιν would not fit with the intransitive verb. The most convincing attempt at disentangling the complex of letters is that made by Peiper and accepted by Smyth and Murray in their editions (H. W. Smyth, Aeschylus [London: Heinemann, 1922]; Gilbert Murray, Aeschylus tragoediae [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937]). It restores the words ἀτίετον ἄπολιν which then must be used almost as synonyms and would refer to the legal situation of the chorus who enjoy no rights, and are ἄτιμοι because they are ἀπόλιδες. Accepting this, the conjecture οὐ σέβω adopted by Murray and Smyth seems to be the best solution. The line then reads ἀτίετον ἄπολιν οὐ σέβω. The subject is the herald who is characterized by his refusal to respect the rights of the chorus whom he considers an ἄτιμος ἄπολις and by that attitude he is contrasted with the king who is so concerned about his own eusebeia towards the maidens and their legal situation.

¹Cf. the personification of Justice in Hesiod Works and Days 256 ff. and in Solon 13. 14 (Diehl). Rich material on Dike in Greek literature is collected in R. Hirzel, Themis, Dike und Verwandtes (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1907). See also Werner Jaeger, Paideia (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1938), pp. 99-103. In spite of the personification the mere use of the idea of dike here in Aeschylus stresses the legal aspect of the scene.

²U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, op. cit., p. 348, translates this line: "tantum si a principio particeps fuit, Justitia socios suos defendit," and refers to an amplified version of the same idea in the Seven against Thebes, 662, where Eteocles declares that since Justice had never been present in the deeds and thoughts of Polynices she will not be his ally in the fight that is to come.

ξύμμαχον δ' ἐλόμενος δίκαν
κρίνε σέβας τὸ πρὸς θεῶν

and follows logically from the intervening lines, 340-95.

After the king has said that Justice is an ally only if she has been so from the beginning the chorus continues to tell the king how he can be εὐσεβής: αἰδοῦ σὺ πρύμναν πόλεος ᾧδ' ἔστεμμένην (l. 341), and with this metaphor another rôle of the king is implied. As Würtheim puts it: "Der König ist Steuermann auf dem Staatsschiff und steht hinten am Ruder."¹ Aeschylus says the same thing of the king in the Seven against Thebes (ll. 2-3) where Eteocles refers to himself as the ὅστις φυλάσσει πρᾶγος ἐν πρύμνῃ πόλεως.²

Pelagus acknowledges that he shudders as he looks at the shrines of the gods of the suppliants, and the chorus strengthens his perturbation with a neatly rhetorical and telling line (343) reminding him that if their plea, which may bring about a war, is heavy (βαρέα), the wrath of Zeus, the god of suppliants, is also heavy (βαρύς). The next six lines are highly dramatic as the clever Danaids appeal to the imagination and sympathy of the king by calling upon him by name as "lord of the Pelasgians" and likening themselves to a heifer which pursued by wolves lows to the herdsman to tell him of its plight. Pelagus seems almost not to have heard this last simile for his next words show that his thoughts have remained on the gods. He says, "Yes, I see these gods, but may this affair be without harm for the people and may no strife come to the city from matters unexpected and unforeseen, for the city has no need of these things" (ll. 356-58). The Danaids counter this wish of the king with one of their own. They call

¹Würtheim, op. cit., p. 183.

²In view of this line from the Seven the interpretation of Würtheim is better than that of Smyth in the Loeb edition, op. cit., p. 39, who says that the gods themselves are regarded as the pilots who direct the ship of state. Smyth is here following Hermann and Paley. Almost all the commentators remark that the line would suggest also the custom of crowning the sterns of ships at the time of festivals. The words are of course connected with the idea of the state as a ship, which occurs elsewhere in Greek literature. Cf. Alcaeus, fr. 118, 119 (Diehl), where the lyric poet describes the difficulties of a ship at sea during a storm. According to Heraclitus in his Homeric Allegories 5, where the fragments are preserved, the storm represents a period of tyranny in the state. Cf. also Plato Euthydemus 291 and Republic vi, 488 A where the art of government and that of the pilot are paralleled.

upon Themis Hikesia and ask her to see to it that their flight also be "without harm." Unfortunately the last part of this speech is textually bad and in spite of emendation is not clear. It is daggered by Wilamowitz, Murray, and Smyth; the scholion is not helpful. The words seem to include a plea for Aidos. Perhaps the lines refer to an individual moral responsibility in such matters, since in the ruler's next speech, for the first time in the play he declares that the Danaids are not suppliants at his personal hearth but suppliants of the common gods of the city, a declaration that brings us to a crucial question. The king maintains accordingly that since the anger of the god will pollute the city in common the people must work out a remedy in common and insists that by himself he could give the maidens no assurances until he had conferred with all the citizens. There are two points involved here: pollution¹ and the unified action of the polis in a time of crisis. We know from the historians and orators that pollution was a working religious term as late as the time of Pericles,² who was accused of still being under the curse incurred by his ancestral Alcmaeonidae at the time of the Cylonian rebellion, after which, as Aristotle appears to tell us at the beginning of the Constitution of Athens, Epimenides of Crete was called in to purify the city.³ The chorus, as always, takes up every new idea to its own advantage and warns Pelasgus to avoid pollution (l. 375). However, it is the other point which is more important for our investigation of the rôle of the king, since in the characters of the king and the suppliants there are two opposing views as to the responsibility of the ruler when there is a possibility of pollution coming upon his people. Pelasgus says that he could not officially promise the assistance of the citizens until he had their common approbation; the chorus answers that the king is the city and the people, that he does not have

¹For a full discussion of pollution see Bonner and Smith, The Administration of Justice, Vol. II (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1938), chap. vii.

²Thucydides i. 126, 127.

³Compare with this situation that of Sophocles' Oedipus the King, where a former unofficial action of the ruler brings pollution to the polis. There it is the acknowledged duty of the monarch to investigate the cause of the miasma. Hesiod too believed that when Dike was violated the entire city was punished, Works and Days 240.

to answer for his actions, that he has the power to rule the hearth and altar of the land by his single nod. The lines in which it makes these statements are so crowded with words that would have been full of meaning for the average Athenian that it is worth while quoting them:

σύ τοι πόλις, σὺ δὲ τὸ δῆμιον,
 πρύτανις ἀκριτος ὢν,
 κρατύνεις βωμόν, ἐστὶν χθονός,
 μονοψήφοισι νεύμασιν σέθεν,
 μονοσκήπτροισι δ' ἐν θρόνοις χρέος
 πᾶν ἐπικραίνεις· ἄγος φυλάσσου [ll. 370-75].

Aside from the objective consideration of the two viewpoints it is interesting to note the psychological contrast between king and chorus. The king takes an official stand that he is responsible to the community and this shows that Aeschylus wants to picture him as a constitutional monarch¹ as some of the later authors picture Theseus, king of Athens, who is represented sometimes as a sort of royal demagogue before the time of democracy. However, it is only natural that the king, who hesitates to fulfill the demands of the chorus and foresees the consequences, should cling to the letter of the law. Perhaps at the same time it is a feature that characterizes him as a man, for it is a masculine point of view to evaluate lawfulness and legal correctness. On the other hand, it is equally natural from the standpoint of the chorus to stress the fact that practically the king's attitude is the decisive one; so its words reflect not only the interest of the Danaids but also their psychology as women.

It is significant that Pelasgus does not immediately refute the suppliants or even insist that they are wrong. He seems again to have been more occupied with his own thoughts and surely each minute during this scene must have made him more and more conscious of the dilemma with which he has to wrestle, for in the next lines he indicates his awareness of the tragic element in the situation. He says first of all that it is impossible to assist the Danaids "without harm" (βλάβης ἄτερ, l. 377); that is,

¹Smyth, Aeschylean Tragedy, p. 40, calls the king's attitude "a naive touch of Athenian political theory," but my own feeling is that there is more of deliberation than naïveté here on the part of the tragedian. Vurtheim, op. cit., p. 175, calls this democratic touch an "historische Fälschung" made by the poet to please the Athenian audience, but Aeschylus hardly intended to approach the myth historically.

it is clear to him that there can be no peaceful solution if he gives them the protection of the Argive forces. Apparently he does not consider the possibility of any sort of verbal settlement with the sons of Egyptus; if he befriends the maidens the result will be war. Evidently he is thinking too of the personal damage that he will suffer by such a step, for the word βλάβης has a legal meaning with which Aeschylus and his audience would be familiar.¹ Nevertheless, as he states the dilemma he is forced to admit that it is not right to dishonor the supplications of the chorus. Finally he gives utterance to his complete inability to cope with the issue:

ἀμυχανῶ δὲ καὶ φόβος μ' ἔχει φρένας
δρᾶσαί τε μὴ δρᾶσαί τε καὶ τύχην ἔλεῖν [ll. 379-80].

These lines best of all give the essence of the tragedy of human decisions and in the mouth of the king they are especially pointed. King though he is, he is helpless and he feels the fear of a mortal involved in a situation which he cannot control by physical strength or intellectual prowess. What does the oxymoron τύχην ἔλεῖν mean? The hairesis is to act or not to act and in the life of a king this question is much more essential than in the life of an ordinary individual, although the modern reader might not pay attention to the fact that the man is a king. Pelasgus formulates the problem explicitly: to make a decision is easy if one has a rule to follow but in this case there are two rules conflicting, and he faces the problem not only with the typical function of a king but with an appreciation of his individual existence in a critical situation. He therefore sees it in its tragic essence.

The chorus of Danaids, ever eager to promote their own interest, remind Pelasgus again of the wrath of Zeus, the guardian of greatly toiling mortals who do not obtain from those near them the justice that is due them (ll. 381-85). Such wrath, they warn the king, is hard to soothe. The king returns to a more practical phase of the investigation and suggests that if according to the law of Egypt they are under the power of the sons of Egyptus no one would willingly oppose such a legally steadfast adversary; so he tells them that they must defend themselves according to the

¹Βλάβης δίκη was the legal term for a lawsuit involving personal damage.

laws of their former home and must plead that their cousins have no legal authority over them. This stressing of the formal aspect of the case is appropriate for a king in diplomatic negotiations. To the question of local (Egyptian) law the young women oppose the idea of individual will and feeling, and, no doubt in alarm because of this new threat that the king would refuse to help them if he were to find a legal loophole, they express a strong wish that they will never be under the domination of the strength of men and again voice their determination to go to any length to flee a marriage that is disagreeable to them. It is here that they command Pelasgus to take Justice as his ally and judge for himself what reverence for the gods is (ll. 395-96). These lines contain an implication that justice involves more than nomos. One has the feeling that the Danaids are gaining ground and that the king begins to recognize the inevitability of his helping them. His reply is almost a plea to the maidens to realize the peril of his position. Taking up their word κρῖνε he answers: οὐκ εὔχριτον τὸ κρῖμα· μή μ' αἰροῦ χριτὴν (l. 397) and repeats that he cannot act "without the people" (ἄνευ δήμου), but this time he appears to concede that the Danaids' idea of kingship is not entirely wrong, for he says he cannot act independently even though he is powerful οὐδέπερ κρατῶν (l. 399). Certainly this phrase could be interpreted as an admission that the real power is in the hands of the ruler but that as a matter of diplomacy and political tact the people are allowed to think that theirs is the sovereignty since they ratify his activities. His next words are additionally enlightening for in them he discloses what is probably his truest motive for wanting to refer the matter to the dēmos. He wants to prevent the possibility of his countrymen accusing him later of having ruined the city to honor strangers (l. 401). Such an utterance in the presence of the suppliants may sound somewhat unkingly but surely it is extremely human. Pelasgus is not only a king; he is also a human being. Perhaps he hopes that this argument at least will awaken the Danaids to some appreciation of his difficulties. By this time one is struck by the pertinacity with which the young women have clung to their own problem. They have not indicated by any word that they have so far forgotten their own pressing needs as to be in sympathy with the unhappy position of the Argive ruler. For a modern reader there is more than an element of selfishness in their

words, for they never admit, even for a moment, that they realize or regret the trouble that their presence has brought to the monarch of Argos. Such a lack of sympathy is not characteristic of the chorus in Greek tragedy in general. On the contrary, in many of the later dramas one of the outstanding features of the chorus is its ability to put itself in the place of one of the characters and to feel with him,¹ but in the Suppliants the chorus is the main actor and its place in the play is such a precarious and tragic one that any indication that it is moved by Pelasgus and his dilemma would lessen the intensity of its concentration on its own problem. While it might in a modern light have been more becoming for the daughters of Danaus to display a womanly grasp of the man's difficulty it is perhaps no less in line with their femininity that they refuse to see any but their own point of view. At any rate, they are still unmoved and revert to the figure of Zeus their protector, this time representing him in the guise of the ἐτεροππετής weighing out injustice to evil beings and justice to the lawful (ll. 403-4). They finish with a question that is no question, asking if in view of this function of Zeus Pelasgus intends to render justice to them.

The king makes one final pathetic plea, but his words express his inability to hold out any longer against their persistence. He begins by stating that there is need for salutary consideration (φροντίδος σωτηρίου, l. 417), need for a seeing eye to go to the very bottom of the matter in order to give counsel as to how, first of all, the outcome will not bring harm to the people and, secondly, how everything will turn out well for the Danaids so that they will not bring down upon the country the "heavy" vengeance of god. He concludes with a question that to a modern reader, at least, is touching: μὲν οὐ δοκεῖ δεῖν φροντίδος σωτηρίου; (L. 417.) But the chorus is untouched and in a fine lyrical passage, wherein the poet uses cretics and dochmiacs to good advantage, they give an effective summary of all their arguments so far and cannot resist adding one new element of persua-

¹About the function of the chorus συμπλαθεῖν, see Horace Ars poetica 196 ff. A. Trendelenburg, Grammaticorum Graecorum de arte tragica iudiciorum reliquiae (Diss., Bonn, 1867), p. 42, has collected judgments of the ancient scholiasts on the tragic poets about the function of the chorus corresponding to the statement of Horace. Cf. hypotheses of Euripides' Alcestis and Orestes. Cf. also the scholia on Sophocles' Ajax 134.

sion. This passage (ll. 418-37) is filled with words carefully selected to provide echoes of all that has gone before. Pelasgus is told to take counsel and as a result to become πανδίκως εὔσε-βης πρόξενος. He is warned again that he must not betray a fugitive by allowing them to be dragged from the shrines of the gods; he is reminded that he must recognize the hybris of the Egyptians and take care not to evoke the anger of Zeus. The young women dramatically picture themselves as being led off like horses in violation of justice, their very garments torn from them. The new argument is typical of Greek thought and drama: the king must beware lest the consequence of his action revert to his children and his house. The one phrase of address used in this résumé by the Danaids implies that they feel they have made their point about where the power of the kingdom lies, for they call upon Pelasgus as the one πᾶν κράτος ἔχων χθονός (l. 425). Their last word is worth quoting for it displays the spirit and conviction of the women: τάδε φράσαι· δίκαια Διόθεν κράτη.¹

The ensuing speech of Pelasgus (ll. 438-54) contains several so-called commonplaces of a tragic sequence, but the poet has arranged these well-known tragic concepts so artfully that this passage together with the king's next long speech must have moved the audience to feel that this king Pelasgus was a real person.² The period of indecision is over and the Argive ruler, conscious that the suppliants are victims of necessity, looks forward with foreboding to the misfortune that must come to him and his people. Certain evils, he thinks, can be remedied, property can be restored, scandal can be corrected but only through sacrifice to the gods can mortals find a remedy, for the shedding of human blood and even then there is doubt about the possibility of help from them. One ray of hope remains in spite of the pessimism, for the king prays that the matter will turn out well contrary to his expectations. The Danaids know no mercy and therefore do not hesitate to climax their pleas with a threat.

¹Wilamowitz' translation of this line is a neat one: "Hoc reputa: iustum est Iovis imperium." This line serves also to illustrate the artistic transitions of Aeschylus. The chorus says φράσαι and the king rejoins πέφρασμαι.

²I cannot agree with Smyth's criticism of the play that "its weakness in psychological analysis results in failure to draw strong characters except in the case of the choral protagonist" (Aeschylean Tragedy, p. 59).

At first they hint about what they have in mind but the king is too much moved by his own visions to concentrate on their implications. Finally they declare that if all else fails they intend to hang themselves at the shrines. The violence of this threat is too much for the king and his reaction is a cry of despair:

ἄτης δ' ἄβυσσον πέλαγος οὐ μάλ' εὖπορον
τόδ' ἐσβέβηκα, κοῦδαμοῦ λιμὴν κακῶν [ll. 470-71].

Once more Pelasgus states the hopelessness of the situation after which with a resignation that is characteristic of a royal figure even in time of greatest strain he says:

ὅμως δ' ἀνάγκη Ζηνὸς αἰδεῖσθαι κότον
ἰκτῆρος· ὄψιστος γὰρ ἐν βροτοῖς φόβος [ll. 478-79],

and turns to Danaus to give him some practical advice. For the king the crisis has been passed and from here on he appears as a political leader who has the actual administration of his duties well in hand and is a man of action.

After Danaus is despatched with an Argive escort to deck the country shrines with suppliant boughs the Danaids become more submissive and less strident in tone although they maintain a certain degree of caution and are not yet completely trustful. The king assures them that he will not give them over to the enemy and explains that he is about to call an assembly of the people in order to make them well disposed toward the Danaids. He orders them to spend their time in prayer and utters a prayer of his own as he makes his exit: *πειθῶ δ' ἔποιτο καὶ τύχη πρακτῆριος* (l. 523).¹ The choral interlude between the exit of the king and the reappearance of Danaus is done in the true Aeschylean manner.² The entire song is a prayer to Zeus for protection. It is on another level an attempt to persuade Zeus to favor their cause by the same sort of artful persuasion that they used with Pelasgus and it is essentially the prayer of women. They appeal to Zeus' memory of his passion for Io and seek to reawaken the sympathy he must have felt when his beloved was suffering in her long wanderings. They remind Zeus that they are the descendants of the woman he loved, that they are his descendants. They ask whom of the

¹For an interpretation of *tychē* in this line see Edmund Berry, The History and Development of the Concept of Theia Moira and Theia Tyche down to and Including Plato (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1940), p. 21.

²Smyth, Aeschylean Tragedy, p. 41, deems this interlude "one of the sublimest hymns in Greek literature."

gods they might better turn to than Zeus, αὐτὸς ὁ πατὴρ φυτουργὸς αὐτόχτισ ἀναξ (l. 592). They pay subtle tribute to his power to be able to help them and perhaps subconsciously they contrast his autarchic power with the less definite security of the mortal king Pelasgus. It is not necessary for Zeus to consult an assembly; for him will and act are almost contemporaneous.

At the end of their prayer Danaus enters bringing the glad tidings that the necessary political formalities have been taken care of and the people have passed decrees insuring the safety of the suppliants. The father's account of the assembly is interesting for it proves how much in earnest the king was when he mentioned the importance of persuasion. From what Danaus reports, Pelasgus was a most persuasive speaker and certainly no political leader would have been conceivable for a citizen of a city state who was incapable of winning over the assembly by the magic of his words.¹ Upon hearing the good news the chorus bursts forth in a paean of exaltation invoking every blessing upon the Argives (ll. 625-709). No sooner have they finished their prayer of gratitude, however, than Danaus changes their feeling of security to one of terror for he informs them that he sees in the distance the ship of their cousins. His daughters are completely panic-stricken and now seem little comforted by the vote of the Argive people. When Danaus goes off to secure aid the maidens give way to their terror and this time their cries to Zeus are the cries of one almost maddened by fear. Nor is their agitation lessened when their fears are realized in the immediate approach of a herald from the Egyptian ship. The conversation with the impudent representative of their cousins, if it can be called a conversation, is quite irrational. The poor girls are so frightened that they do not seem to know what they are saying. This scene is very convincing and must have aroused genuine pity in the audience. While the herald orders them to the ship they shout imprecations upon him and his masters, call upon the aid of Zeus and their father, Danaus, and finally shout to the king to come.

¹The king is represented by Hesiod Theogony 80-96 as the speaker who is inspired by the Muses, and eloquence is his main characteristic. In the time of Aeschylus the rhetor in the assembly takes the place of the Homeric kings and it was natural for Aeschylus to portray his constitutional monarch as an eloquent public speaker.

Just as the herald threatens to carry them off by the hair of their heads the monarch of Argos enters with almost melodramatic precision. In this scene the king appears in an entirely different light and one feels that "he is every inch a king." This is significant because it indicates how much confidence he has gained by knowing that he has the sanction of the citizens and that this approval of helping the Danaids has been given in a constitutional manner. We see him now for the first time since that vote had been passed. The scene involves the king's treatment of the insolent envoy of the Egyptians and the terrified young women. Toward the herald his manner is that of a superior being dealing with an insignificant person who is behaving even for his lowly status in an unseemly fashion. The very first word with which Pelasgus addresses him shows his contempt, for he begins οὔτως (l. 911). He has grasped the situation immediately and realizes the sort of person he has to treat. He speaks to him in words that he will surely understand and does not hesitate to tell him that for a barbarian among Greeks he is overbold. In the stichomythia from 916 to 930 the herald is no match for the king although he is completely brazen throughout and shows no respect at all for the person of the monarch. The only weapon he can use is threats; so he warns Pelasgus that he will report this outrageous reception to his masters. The one bit of insight that he displays is when he refers to the god of war as a judge not won over by the testimony of witnesses or bribes, but this is not surprising, since even an unfeeling individual should have some idea of the reluctance with which a ruler looks upon a coming war. The king is disdainful and refuses even to give his name to the stranger. He says that he and his masters will come to know it and states definitely that the Danaids will not be surrendered unless they are persuaded to go willingly. He does tell the herald that a decree to that effect has been passed by the people and with that bit of information he orders the fellow to get out of sight. With an added threat to which the king replies confidently and curtly, the herald departs.

Pelasgus then turns to the young women and here his manner and tone are gentle and reassuring. He urges them to be courageous and bids them go into the fortified city where they will receive suitable lodging. He offers them complete hospitality giving them a choice as to where they would like to stay, and even

suggests that they stay in his own home. He assures them that he is their protector together with the people who have decreed to defend them. The kind words of the king come in effective contrast to his harsh dialogue with the herald. The maidens are deeply grateful to him and modestly ask him to send their father to them so that he can decide where it is best for them to be.

The way in which the king leaves in the play does not contribute to giving us a satisfactory final impression of this important person, who in the first part of the drama in his discussion with the suppliants on their situation had developed into a real tragic figure. Like every other part of the Suppliants this one can be understood only by the fact that this play is but the first part of the trilogy and that the king must have appeared again in the following drama, the Egyptians. Since the scene of the middle part of the trilogy was the same as that of the Suppliants, as is evident from the way in which the arrival of the enemy is prepared in the first play, a conflict could only develop if the protection promised by the king became effective and if the king as the representative of the state of Argos opposed the attempt of the sons of Egyptus to seize the Danaids. That scene of the second play must have offered the poet another opportunity to make use of the figure of Pelasgus and to display his character as a responsible agent for his community. In the second play Aeschylus must have described the consequences of the decision of Pelasgus. The tragic nature of the character of this conflict and its outcome is sufficiently foreshadowed by the analysis of the dilemma of the king and his people in the first drama. Even though we do not know enough of the central play to reconstruct with probability the plot and the part which the king took in it, it is likely that there the tragic elements contained in the figure of Pelasgus potentially must have been actualized.¹

¹There are of course various attempts at reconstruction. See Smyth, Aeschylean Tragedy, p. 43.

CHAPTER II

XERXES, THE ORIENTAL DESPOT

In the Suppliants Aeschylus was characterizing a Greek king who was the representative of the law and order of the Greek polis, whereas in the second of his extant plays the action centers about the royal figures of an oriental monarchy. Before beginning an analysis of the roles of Xerxes and Darius as well as that of Atossa, the Queen Mother, in the Persians several factors might be mentioned that are likely to have influenced the poet's presentation of them. First of all, he is portraying here true historical persons who belong to his own period rather than a ruler like Pelasgus taken from remote mythical tradition; therefore, he will be in a way restricted by the actual facts familiar to his audience. No doubt the Athenians were no less interested in the settings and personalities of the Great King than an American is intrigued by the King of England and, although the means of communication were by no means comparable to those of today, many stories of the Persian court must have made their way to the ears of the inhabitants of the Greek city states. Moreover, the Athenians had previously witnessed another poet's concept of these royal persons in the play of Phrynichus produced in 476 B.C., four years before the drama of Aeschylus, and centering about the same theme. The question whether or not Aeschylus was actually present at Salamis, as he is said to have been at Marathon, does not lessen the validity of the participation which he shared with all Greece in this all-important conflict which reached its solution before the opening scene of the drama.

Tragedy itself was by this time more fully developed, for several years had elapsed since the Suppliants was first produced. The Persians must have been a good specimen of the contemporary theatre in as much as it was given the first prize. Two features distinguish this play from the one just studied. The chorus has achieved its new function as a secondary element in the action,¹

¹Cf. chap. i, p. 14.

and the play is not, like the Suppliants, a trilogy. The poet has crystallized in one play the tragic essence of a great historical event when viewed from the standpoint of the individuals and peoples involved.

The setting of the Persians is Susa, the capital city and the seat of the royal palace of the Great King, a setting which gives the poet an opportunity to depict the royal personages in the splendor associated with the lord of an oriental empire. The opening lines prove how successful Aeschylus was in grasping such an opportunity, for every word uttered by the Persian nobles emphasizes the magnificence of the court. As the play begins the Pistoi who make up the chorus identify themselves as the group which had been chosen by the king because of age to watch over the realm during his absence. They are not a constitutional body in any sense, but rather the privy council of the monarch who represent the royal power in the absence of their master. In the parodos it is interesting to observe their constant consciousness of the king. For them the king is Persia and the empire is the person of the monarch. The first reference to the king (l. 5) characterizes Xerxes as an oriental monarch whose position is based on legitimacy, οὗς αὐτὸς ἄναξ ἑξέρξης βασιλεὺς Δαρείογενής. Note the redundancy of the line, wherein the choice and arrangement of the words indicate the pride that the old men feel when they reflect that theirs is the privilege of representing this great personage and that he himself has delegated to them their position. In the next lines the king is omnipresent whether the Pistoi use the adjective "royal"¹ or whether they list the mighty Persian leaders, each one a great warrior himself, each one a king, yet subject to the Great King (ll. 24, 44). The old men conclude their enumeration of this overwhelming array of heroes from all parts of Asia by declaring that in their entirety they follow "the dread commands of the king" (l. 58). Here the king is first of all the war-lord of Asia, the leader of a great army; his commands are δεῖναι. This emphasis on the exalted power of the monarch becomes even more impressive when contrasted with the longing of those at home for the absent troops in the next lines, where the Pistoi describe the whole land of Asia, the nurse of

¹For example, l. 8 νόστω τῷ βασιλείῳ; l. 66 βασιλείος στρατός.

the men of Persia, as groaning for her nurslings and picture the parents and wives of the soldiers as reckoning the days and fearing the lengthening period of absence. Only such a king could have commandeered an expedition like the one in hand. The very conditions of the undertaking would have been an obstacle to any other individual, but to the will of the Great King there is no obstacle. The natural mood of the Persians seems to be confidence in their leader and optimism with regard to the might of their forces.

The adjective used to describe the king as leader of the "city-sacking" army is *θούριος* (l. 73) and the same epithet is applied to Xerxes in two other passages in the play when his mother, Atossa, is speaking to the ghost of Darius (ll. 718, 754). It is applied specifically to none of the other kings in Aeschylus. The word suggests a definite ruthlessness and, since it is a practical equivalent of *Θούριος*, which is always used in Homer to designate the war-god, Ares, it has a fierce, almost wild, connotation. The root meaning of the term is reflected in the verb of the same sentence, *ἐλαύνει*. As the war-lord rushes on towards the enemy he drives before him a *ποιμανόριον θεῖον* (l. 75). Here the poet has made use of a well-known Homeric concept in which the ruler is thought of as the shepherd of his people, *ποιμὴν λαῶν*. Aeschylus transformed the idea by the creation of a new noun *ποιμάνωρ*, a compound of *ποιμήν* and *ἀνὴρ*; the king is the shepherd of men. This new word is spoken by Atossa later in the play (l. 241) and given a warlike meaning quite unlike the beneficent Homeric phrase. By deriving the adjective in question from the new noun and transferring the concept from the shepherd to the flock the situation appears in a totally different light, so that when the tragedian adds to the picture the word *θούριος* already discussed and the phrase *ἐπὶ πᾶσιν χεῖρα* (l. 73) he creates an amazingly vivid portrait of the despot in the rôle of military leader. The *Pistoi*, however, are not content with this exaltation of their lord and end the antistrophe with a reference to Xerxes as the *χρυσογόνου γενεᾶς ἰσόθεος φῶς*. Not only is he called a "godlike man," but he is spoken of as the descendant of Perseus, the son of Zeus, by what Smyth calls "an audacious etymology."¹ Darius is also called "godlike" (l. 856; cf. l. 633,

¹Smyth, *Aeschylean Tragedy*, p. 85.

where Darius is spoken of as ἰσοδαίμων). One might think of similar expressions in the Homeric tradition¹ but again in Aeschylus the idea has been transformed and given a Persian or oriental turn. When Homer describes a warrior as godlike he is thinking of the various qualities in the man which make him so outstanding among mortal men that he seems to be like the gods. But in none of the Homeric instances is there a suggestion that these men should be the recipients of the adoration given the gods, whereas in the Persians the tone of the chorus is so intense that they seem to be speaking quite literally when they say their king is equal to the gods, and this impression is confirmed when they address Atossa, the queen mother, as the "wife of a god of the Persians and mother of a god of the Persians (l. 157, θεοῦ μὲν εὐνά-τεϊρα Περσῶν, θεοῦ δὲ καὶ μήτηρ ἔφυε).

In the next strophe (ll. 80 ff.) the eyes of the chorus are still on their master. Instead of simply describing the army they describe the king, and the king and the army become identical. Xerxes becomes a sort of monster, πολύχειρ καὶ πολυνάυτης, with the dark glance of a murderous dragon. The effect of these lines is highly dramatic, and one observes that the tragic poet here in contrast to the epic poet dramatizes his own story. There is something more than a simile involved; the king is the dragon and the dragon is in turn the symbol of warlike power like the Chinese dragon. Line 84, another clause in the same description, while not so startling, is part of the same method: Σύριόν θ' ἄρμα διώ-κων. Xerxes, the king, is the one who drives the Syrian car; that is, all the chariots of the army become his chariot. Such picturizations serve to show how differently the Greek poet conceived the Persian monarch from the Greek king in the Suppliants. In the earlier play the idea of the king was almost abstract, for Pelasgus was most of all an instrument of his people aiming in all simplicity at sōphrosynē. Xerxes is a concrete embodiment of all the power and magnificence of a great empire. The antistrophe (ll. 86 ff.) shifts from the king to the army, and the counsellors express their confidence that no one can withstand such a mighty force of men, and they conclude with satisfaction that the army

¹Cf. Iliad ll. 565, where the identical phrase occurs with reference to Euryalos, one of the warriors under Diomedes, or Odyssey ll. 342, where Telemachos is called a "godlike man," after Athena has implanted might and courage in his heart.

of the Persians is irresistible and her people strong of heart.¹ After one reads this expression of confidence in the invincibility of the army the next lines come as something of a shock to a modern interpreter, but they are certainly not incomprehensible in the usual scheme of a Greek drama where the mood is likely to change from hope to fear, or rather where an expression of hope is likely to evoke uneasiness. The sequence as it stands is typical of Aeschylean drama, in which the religious meaning of Atē is always present to the mind of the poet and his characters whenever the element of hybris or something verging on hybris is expressed and thus the chorus feels two things: confidence in old Persian valor and military skill, and tragic fear of the possible consequence of any mortal action. They ask themselves the question: "What mortal man will escape the treacherous deceit of the deity; who with nimble foot will jump from out its toils?" Then they explain the reason for such queries by introducing the figure of Atē who lures mortals into her snare.² Once the king is referred to as mortal he is insecure. In all his power and glory he is a mere human being, and the moment that fact is realized he appears subject to the same law as all mortals and even in a more dangerous degree since his position makes him more liable to Atē because of the greater likelihood of an exalted person's succumbing to hybris. This is a purely Greek chord in the otherwise barbaric chorus and brings to mind such Herodotean stories as that of Solon and Croesus.³ As Professor Jaeger has shown, this is the fundamental problem of the time of Solon and Aeschylus and the central problem of this play especially. This was always the reaction of the Greeks to the idea of a barbarous despot. Nor is it strange that these words are put into the mouth of the Persian old men, for they represent the wisdom of age as well as Persian nobility, and they too see the point of risk. After this moment

¹In the modern texts of Aeschylus there is a transposition of lines and strophes at this point. Murray and Smyth apparently follow Wilamowitz in their editions. My own interpretation of this part of the chorus is based on the theory demonstrated by Prof. Jaeger in an Aeschylus seminar that there is no real reason not to accept the order in the MSS.

²The question of Atē in Aeschylus is discussed by W. Jaeger in Paideia, pp. 253 ff., with a specific reference to this passage on p. 266.

³Herodotus 1. 34, 86.

of doubt the old men give the reason for their confidence by explaining that this warlike mission had been given to the Persians by Fate in accordance with the will of god θεῶθεν (l. 102). The two verbs in the strophe have especial force: ἐκράτησεν, ἐπέσκηψε. It is as if the poet had said that this activity of war had been made a valid norm for the nation and that Fate had not only set the norm but enforced it. The activities mentioned here imply that the type of warfare enjoined upon them was that concerned with the siege and destruction of cities, whereas the next lines suggest that the Persians and their king have gone even farther than the gods ordained in extending their sphere of activity beyond the sea "trusting to lightly-woven cables and man-made devices" (ll. 112-13). This is a tone that runs throughout the drama as a leitmotif. The Pistoi are after all men of long experience and they have reason to admit in view of that experience that their "black-chitoned heart" is stirred with fear lest the city come to learn that it has been emptied of its men. For two strophes the old men indulge in these fearful musings and then they take their place near the old palace just before the queen makes her entrance.

The actuality of the deep loyalty and reverence for the royal house that is characteristic of the counsellors is evidenced by their reception and treatment of the Queen Atossa, and, as a matter of fact, this entire question of the relation of the chorus to the members of the royal family gives a fine insight into what Aeschylus must have felt was the essence of Persian monarchy. One of the proofs of the dramatic genius of the Greek poet is in his convincing dramatization of the concept of pistis. The entire idea of personal loyalty to a ruler was strange to the political feeling of the Greeks, which was objective and founded on the laws and individual rights that made up the community of citizens. In the Persians subjective loyalty is stressed as the very element upon which the throne was built. The Persian throne is indeed carried by the faithful counsellors. The entire scheme is perhaps best paralleled in our own knowledge by what we know of the feudal system which was built on the same foundation. The student of Greek can find the same ideas in the Anabasis and Cyropaedia of Xenophon, but for a citizen of the United States or ancient Athens such a relationship cannot exist in the reality of his own experience. It is the work of genius to discern the en-

chantment as well as the moral foundation of the Persian power and to recognize it as something more than mere brutal force. The power becomes much more formidable when shown with this substratum, and the reader feels that the exposition is not external but that the poet sees the system from within. The actions and words of the Pistoi are an indirect characterization of their king.

When the old men announce the coming of Atossa they speak of her first as the mother of their king and liken her coming to the light in the eyes of the gods. In the next line they refer to her as "my queen," applying the possessive pronoun as part of their personal devotion. She is their queen and no doubt the aged counsellors who had served for so many years under her husband Darius, felt that she was truly theirs. In this same announcement appear three words compounded with πρόσ: προσπίτνω, προσφθόγοις, προσανδῶν. The passage illustrates clearly the technical meaning of such compounds. Aeschylus must have found them most appropriate for the solemn language of the court in addressing their majesties. As the queen approaches, the chorus greets her with four lines which further exemplify the character of this solemn language. She is addressed as the most exalted mistress of all Persian women and she receives her honor most of all because of her relation to the former and the present king. The second line of this invocation is significant for the position of the queen in the eyes of her people:

μήτηρ ἡ ξέρξου γεραιὴ χαῖρε, Δαρείου γύναι·
θεοῦ μὲν εὐνάτειρα Περσῶν θεοῦ δὲ καὶ μήτηρ ἔφες
[ll. 156-57].

Note that in the first line the kings are given their proper names, whereas in the second Atossa's double relationship is repeated in chiasitic order, where both kings, as we said before, are called gods of the Persians.¹ The queen mother is thus addressed with all the titles on which her dignity is based. The function of the last line of this address is also interesting, for there the chorus says that Atossa is the mother of the god Xerxes unless the old daimōn is no longer with the army. Such an observation is more than an artistic transition to the fears the queen is about to voice and makes the whole address more than a

¹Cf. ll. 644, 711, where Darius is also called a god by the counsellors and his queen, respectively.

mere ornament of the scene. As in the parodos, here also the tragic poet knows how to combine reverence with human doubt and this combination makes the appearance of the chorus and the queen all the more tragic. This line is, in a sense, a second introduction to the main thought of the play and will be referred to again in a discussion of the queen's reaction to it.

From the first words of Atossa one sees that she is aware of her position, for she gives a word picture of herself leaving the golden halls of the palace and the common chamber of Darius and herself. Such an adjective as χρυσεοστόλμους (l. 159) must have excited the imagination of the spectator so that he did not have to rely on the actual scene for the effect of magnificence. Without hesitation the queen expresses her anxiety to the chorus, employing the same verb as that used by the Pistoi when they admitted their fear previously: ἀπόσσω (l. 116). It is worth noting that in the next lines the queen indicates that to her mind wealth is connected with the idea of the Persian king, and she refers to the riches accumulated by her husband "not without the help of some god" (l. 164), but this speculation on wealth is not the main point in her mind. Her fear is connected rather with the delayed return of her son, and she states that she considers the presence of the master the eye of the house. In her fear she makes a direct appeal to the faithful counsellors and declares that in them are all her counsels. The Pistoi assure her of their willingness to comply with her slightest wish, and the queen relates to them an allegorical dream in which Xerxes appeared in a chariot drawn by two fair women. The one rebelled, and the young king was thrown to the ground, after which Darius appeared to comfort his son, who tore his garments on beholding his father. The account of the dream is followed by the description of an omen witnessed by Atossa that very morning, an eagle that was attacked by a falcon. Both of these experiences inspired fear in the queen and she tells the chorus that they were fearful for her to look upon and for them to hear. It is at this point that the queen adds one of the most important sentences in connection with the status of the ruler in Persia:

εὖ γάρ¹ ἴστε, παῖς ἐμός

¹Wilamowitz, Aischylos Interpretationen (Berlin: Weidmann, 1914), pp. 52 ff., tries in vain to refer this γάρ and the follow-

πράξας μὲν εὖ θαυμαστός ἂν γένοιτ' ἄνθρωπος,
κακῶς δὲ πράξας οὐχ ὑπεύθυνος πόλει,
σωθεὶς δ' ὁμοίως τῆσδε κοιρανεῖ χθονός [ll. 211 ff].

The word ὑπεύθυνος is used of course from the point of view of the Greek audience and serves to bring out the contrast between the Persian and Greek ideas of a political leader, since every Greek official had to render an account at the end of his term of office. The word is utterly democratic and by its use the Greek audience is made to feel what the barbarian king is.¹ No doubt the dramatic function of this remark of the queen is to answer the doubt expressed by the chorus in line 158 as to whether the daimōn is still with the house. Her answer is that, whether or not the daimōn is still with the king, if he himself is saved he will not have to give an account to anyone and he will continue to rule Persia as he did before. The tragic aspect of this position of the monarch and this particular expression of it appears later in the play where Darius reminds the queen and chorus that Zeus, "the chastiser of overweening minds" is a εὐθυνος βασις (l. 828); so everyone, even the Great King, is subject to account in the absolute order of the world.

The reply of the chorus to the queen is completely submissive and reassuring, and there is no indication that she has said anything strange or alarming to them. They advise her majes-

ing remarks of the queen to the immediately preceding words and the fear of a Persian defeat caused by the dream. This connection would have the queen say to the Pistoi, "This is bad news for you, for the king remains the absolute monarch who is responsible to no one." This does not seem logical, since the fact that he will remain the absolute despot does not make the prospect of Xerxes' defeat appreciably worse from the point of view of the chorus. A second suggestion of Wilamowitz is that one of two thoughts be supplied: 1) "denn es kann Unruhen geben, und ihr dürft nicht vergessen, dass der König König bleibt," or 2) "denn ihr habt für Ordnung zu sorgen, und wenn er heimkehrt, ist der König in seiner ganzen Majestät wieder da." In either case he supplies a thought which seems to be out of place in the present situation, for Aeschylus does not allude with one word to the duty of the counsellors to keep order in case of revolution. I prefer the view of Prof. Jaeger that it seems natural for the queen to refer at the end of her speech, which is a report of her own dreams and fears, to the fears and doubts of the chorus in l. 158.

¹Cf. Plato Laws iii, 691 C-D. He does not reject ἀνυπεύθυνος ἀρχή as such, as it seems from this passage, although he thinks that the Persian monarchy degenerated by the excess of autocratic rule. What he thinks most dangerous is the conferment of such a power upon θνητῆς ψυχῆς φύσις . . . νέα, which is precisely the case with Xerxes.

ty to offer sacrifice, first to the gods, and then to Darius, that the omen and dream may prove to be propitious for herself, her children, the city, and all the people (ll. 215 ff.).¹ The queen is content with their advice and directs her thoughts momentarily to the land in which her son is fighting. The queen's naive questions about Athens are a clever device used by Aeschylus to glorify the victorious city and delight his audience. However, the mere fact that Atossa could ask such questions may mean that even the highest Persian women were not informed or given educational opportunities. This stichomythia is interesting for our purposes because it reveals the royal attitude. After asking first for the location of Athens her majesty inquires if her son wanted ἑρᾶσαι πόλιν. As Xenophon² tells us, hunting was a royal sport in Persia; so the use of the verb here is effective. The chorus assures Atossa that the king wanted to make all Hellas subject to himself. The queen then makes inquiry about the resources of the enemy, first man power, and secondly wealth; she wants to know also of their method of warfare. It is here that she asks the question mentioned before: τίς δὲ ποιμάνων ἔπασσι χάριδ' ἐσπόζει στρατῶι; (l. 241). To this question the Athenian poet proudly replies through the counsellors: "They are called the slaves and subjects of no man" (l. 242). This was doubtless one of the high points of the play during its production at Athens but the queen's reaction is a typically autocratic one. She wonders if they have no king how they can possibly withstand the enemy and the Pistoi are forced to remind her that even without a king they had done very well in resisting the forces of her husband at Marathon.

At this instant the messenger arrives announcing the disaster that has befallen the Persian forces. Most important for the understanding of the Persian rulers is the reaction of the queen to the news. For some forty lines it is the chorus that reacts verbally to the direful message and theirs are only lines of lamentation that seem more than anything else a mournful accom-

¹This advice of the counsellors to the queen reminds the reader of the rôle of Hecuba in the sixth book of the *Iliad* where she was ordered to propitiate Athena with a peplos and it also recalls the organization of thanksgiving sacrifices by Clytaemnestra in the Agamemnon of Aeschylus.

²Xenophon Cyropaedia 1. 2. 10; Anabasis 1. 9. 6.

paniment to the tragic facts revealed by the messenger. Finally (l. 290) Atossa speaks. Although she is a woman, although this very messenger may bring word that her son is dead, she remembers that she is the queen and that at this moment it is to her that her subjects turn since of themselves they have strength neither to act nor to explain the defeat.¹ It is significant that the poet saw fit to have the queen mother say that although she is also stunned by their misfortunes, it is necessary, nevertheless, for mortals to bear the woes which the gods send. She is first a queen and then a mother, for even before she knows what has happened to her son she tries to direct the attitude of her counselors and to encourage the messenger.² Only after that does she ask the question that was foremost in her mind: "Who is there still alive, which of the leaders left his post through death?" (ll. 296 ff.). Even then she does not ask directly if Xerxes lives, but the messenger understands or perhaps automatically speaks first of the king replying that Xerxes himself lives and looks upon the light. It is the woman and mother who says:

ἔμοις μὲν εἴπας δώμασιν φάος μέγα
καὶ λευκὸν ἡμᾶρ νυκτὸς ἐκ μελαγχίμου [ll. 300-301].

One has the feeling that this is almost an aside in the modern theatrical terminology since the messenger goes right on with his account of the other leaders and their fate.

The rest of this scene is more a glorification of the bravery of the Athenians written for Athenians than anything else, but we must observe for our picture the feelings of the messenger, who was an eye-witness to the defeat of Xerxes. He does not imply at all that the Greek victory was due to the inability of the young king. Rather he assigns the entire event to the activity of some divinity and this line of reasoning is in keeping with the view-point of both the chorus and the queen as well as of Xerxes himself. In line 345 the messenger declares that some

¹In another crisis in the play when King Darius appears it is the queen and not the Pistoi who has the courage to tell her husband what has happened.

²Both Smyth and Murray are unqualified in their praise of the character of Atossa, the queen-mother. Smyth, Aeschylean Tragedy, p. 85, says: "Of the Oriental potentates Atossa is the most truly human. She is Queen, but more than Queen--she is mother and wife." Gilbert Murray, Aeschylus, p. 127, remarks: "Atossa is magnificent; not a word escapes her that is unworthy of a great Queen."

daimōn destroyed the army and in line 354 he states that it was an "avenging spirit" or an "evil daimōn" who began the battle by allowing Xerxes to be deceived by the guile of the Athenians. In the same speech he adds that Xerxes gave his orders with confidence for "he did not know the future that had been ordained by the gods" (ἐκ θεῶν, l. 373). Later when he describes the slaughter of the Persians who had been assigned to Psyttalea his comment on the strategy of his king is that he had badly misjudged the result for "a god gave the glory of the sea-battle to the Greeks" (ll. 454, 455). These warriors had been the picked men of the king and Xerxes himself had sent them to the island. The daemonic aspect of the event is emphasized by their destruction.

The queen readily takes up the interpretation of the messenger and cries: "O hated daimōn, how you have deceived the Persians of their hopes" (l. 472). No doubt she is glad to cling to this explanation of the defeat even though her son is not strictly accountable to anyone. It may be a bit of diplomacy that she voices the paradox that comes to her that her son who went forth to exact vengeance for Marathon found the vengeance a bitter one, since it was turned back upon himself and his people. After a further exposition of the woes of the defeated forces the chorus too addresses the daimōn, echoing the reaction of messenger and queen:

ὦ δυσπρόγητε δαίμων ὡς ἄγαν βαρὺς
ποδοῖν ἐνήλου παντὶ Περσικῷ· γένει [ll. 515-16].

Before leaving to offer the sacrifice suggested by the chorus, the queen bids her counsellors πιστοῖσι πιστὰ συμφέρειν βουλευμάτων (l. 528) and asks them to console and escort her son to the palace if he returns during her absence. To her mind, even a defeated king, or, perhaps, especially a defeated king should be well received by his Pistoi.

While the queen is performing her sacrificial duties the chorus gives way to its dismay and grief. Although they begin by calling upon Zeus as the source of the misfortune the interlude during which they had some little time to think has altered their opinion. For the first time they boldly state that all that has happened was due to Xerxes:

Ξέρξης μὲν [γὰρ] ἄγαγεν, ποποῖ,
Ξέρξης δ' ἀπώλεσεν, τοτοῖ,
Ξέρξης δὲ πάντ' ἐπέσπε δυσφρόνως
βαρίδες τε ποντία [ll. 550-52].

These lines seem to confirm the doubts that they had expressed earlier in the play about the rashness of a generation that trusts to man-made devices and dare to brave the sea. Corresponding to these lines are three others with unequivocal meaning:

νᾶες μὲν ἄγαγον, ποποῖ,
νᾶες δ' ἀπώλεσαν, τοτοῖ,
νᾶες πανωλέθροισιν ἐμβολαῖς,
αἳ τ' Ἰαόνων χεῖρες [ll. 560-62].

If Xerxes had trusted less in his ships and had followed the more sober measures of his father such utter destruction would have been impossible. Very naturally the old men recall the former régime of their own contemporary Darius and the reign of the old king becomes for them by contrast a golden age of Persia. They feel too the indignity of the young king himself barely escaping in retreat and gradually they come to realize that if they themselves see the situation so clearly the people, bereft of their men, are likely to begin to resent Persian rule. The last strophe is illuminating:

τοῖ δ' ἀνὰ γᾶν Ἀσίαν δὴν
οὐκέτι περσονομοῦνται,
οὐκέτι δασμοφοροῦσιν
δεσποσύνοισιν ἀνάγκαις,
οὐδ' ἐς γᾶν προπίτνοντες
ἄρξονται βασιλείᾳ
γὰρ διόλωλεν ἰσχὺς [ll. 584-90].

For the aged counsellors, whose lives have been centered about the royal house, this is the essence of the tragedy. The rashness of the young king has discredited the very monarchy they represent. Although, from a modern standpoint, the Pistoi do not give us a picture of what we would call an admirable type of government they themselves are scarcely passing a severe judgment upon Persian kingship as such. As a matter of fact, in their sorrow they turn to a representative of that kingship and ask the ghost of Darius what course they must follow in the future. It is noteworthy, too, that even though they have openly deplored the inability of the present king, when he finally appears they follow the orders of the queen and give him a royal escort.

Whatever they feel about Xerxes the old men respond with their customary reverence when the queen reappears and asks them to invoke the spirit of Darius while she pours libations to the gods of the underworld and in the hymn that follows (ll. 628 ff.) their admiration for the former king seems to have been intensified as a result of their unfortunate experience during the rule

of the son. A mere list of the epithets applied to Darius by the chorus in this part of the play would give a full characterization of the king as seen through the eyes of his Pistoi. We mentioned earlier in the chapter that Darius was regarded by the chorus as ἰσοδαίμων (l. 633) and the first two strophes and antistrophes in this particular song emphasize the divine aspects of the monarch. As the old men beseech the chthonic deities to send up to them the spirit of their king, they speak of him as a great and blessed spirit, the Susa-born god of the Persians whose like Persian ground had never before covered. When they contrast him with Xerxes as they recall that he never destroyed the men of the nation they remember that he used to be called θεομήτωρ (l. 654) and he was that in deed since his military expeditions were successful. The relation of the king to some divine power is never wholly absent from the mind of any character in the play and usually this is the first aspect that occurs to each of them, but even the Persians are not unaware of a sort of personal relation of the monarch to his subjects, as we have seen in the rôle of Atossa. This same chorus of the Pistoi reveals the personal confidence and love that they have for Darius and gives the impression that they turn to their former ruler with much more than formal aspiration. At the beginning of the invocation they say that Darius alone of mortals can tell them what to do, and even while they stress the divine qualities of the king they say:

ἦ φίλος ἀνὴρ, φίλος ὃ-
χθος· φίλα γὰρ κέκευθεν ἦθη [ll. 647-48].

Although the last strophe begins with more strictly royal titles, they conclude with an appeal to the king as "father Darius." As one hears their final form of address here, ὦ πολύχλαυτε φίλοισι· θανών (l. 674), he feels that this is a personal as well as a political grief that the old men are expressing. However, even the less personal touches help to complete the formal picture of the Persian monarch. Darius is urged to appear at the edge of his tomb in the full regalia of a ruler with his royal tiara and saffron sandals.

Equally illuminating are the words of Darius to the chorus when he appears. His address is threefold: ὦ πιστὰ πιστῶν ἡλικίης θ' ἡβης ἐμῆς Πέρσαι· γεραιοί (ll. 681-82), and in it he recognizes their present position and their relation to him as well. When the Pistoi murmur that restrained by their "oldtime fear" they

are unable to answer his questions Darius tells them to lay aside their "reverence"¹ and speak. The general manner of Darius during this scene is impressive and in some ways he appears to a modern reader more Greek than Persian, for in only one passage does he adopt anything of the tone of an oriental despot and even there, where he is reviewing the history of Persian monarchy, while he speaks of the subjection of certain peoples by force, he commends one of his predecessors because "wisdom guided his mind" (l. 767), and says of another that he was not hated by the gods because he was εὐφρων (l. 772). The first lines of this passage in which Darius introduces his review of the Persian royal line have a Homeric flavor where he justifies their power:

ἐξ οὗτε τιμὴν Ζεὺς ἀναξ τήνδ' ὥπασεν,
 εἴν' ἄνδρα πάσης Ἀσίδος μηλοτρόφου
 ταγεῖν, ἔχοντα σκήπτρον εὐθυντήριον [ll. 762-64].

The judgment of Darius upon the actions of his son is in keeping with the atmosphere of the entire play, but is given a poignancy because of the father-son relationship and the clarity with which Darius sees the whole situation.² One of the first questions that the old king asks of his queen is which of their sons commanded the expedition, and in his first substantial speech after he has the necessary information he uses the expression "my son" three times in less than fifteen lines. While he recognizes the folly of Xerxes, a mortal who thought he could conquer the gods with his fetters, he does not say, as Solon might, that he deliberately brought ruin to his country. He says first of all (l. 740) that Zeus caused the fulfillment of the oracles for his son but he implies at the same time that Xerxes had his share in bringing about his own undoing: ἀλλ' ὅταν σπεύδῃ τις αὐτός, χά θεὸς συνάπτεται (l. 742). Moreover, two lines later Darius ex-

¹By changing from their word "fear" (τάβος) to his word for "reverence" (αἰδώς) Darius elevates their dread of him at least for the moment, but in l. 703 he accepts their own description of their feeling and calls it δέος.

²Plato in the Laws explains the decline of the Persian state by ἀπαιδευσία. The first example is Cambyses, the second Xerxes (cf. 694 C and 695 Cff.). This is interesting since Aeschylus makes Darius even after his death the educator of Xerxes, who teaches him φρονεῖν. According to Plato, this attempt at paideia was too late. The Persian kings who were really great men, like the great Athenian statesmen, neglected the education of their own sons because they were too busy with war and other tasks; so the sons ruined what their fathers had accomplished.

plains that Xerxes brought these things about because of the "rashness of youth" and a little later he asks if it was not a disease of the mind that overcame his son. It is possible that the last question is more the query of a father than of a judge. However, the attitude of the former ruler to the insolence of the Persians is unequivocal and it is here that he refers to Zeus as the "chastiser of overweening minds."¹ Although Darius knows that the entire action has been in the hands of some higher power, he knows too that the result that is visited upon the young king and his people is not undeserved and it is in this realization that Darius stands forth in the play, as Professor Jaeger has put it,² as "the embodiment of the Aeschylean conception of *φρονην*, tragic knowledge acquired through suffering."

After the descent of Darius to the underworld there is a carefully constructed transitional chorus which leads up to the entrance of Xerxes. The counsellors extol the successful reign of the old king and the excellent advantages of the old régime.³ It is important to notice the features of the former rule which they stress. At the beginning there is a general statement that when Darius was king they had prosperity (*ἀγαθὰς τε πολισσονόμου βιοτᾶς*, ll. 852-53), and then they recall the specific phases of their good fortune at that time. First, their armies had been *εὐδόκιμοι*, that is, successful. Secondly they say *νομίσματα πύρινα πάντ' ἐπηύθυνεν* (ll. 859-60).⁴ The next admirable feature

¹The same adjective "overweening" (*ὕπερκομπος*) is applied to Xerxes in line 831 when Darius instructs the *Pistoi* to prevent Xerxes from incurring the punishment of god through his "overweening boldness."

²Werner Jaeger, *Paideia*, p. 255.

³Cf. Isocrates *Areopagiticus* 20 ff., where everything said of ancient Athens is chosen in contrast to the conditions in Athens at the time the speech was written.

⁴There are various interpretations of this passage and, as Paley (F. A. Paley, *The Tragedies of Aeschylus* [London: Whittaker, 1879]) observes in his edition, p. 240, "several distinct scholia variously combined and confused in the Med." If one understands by *νομίσματα* "civil institutions" and refers them as Paley does to *πολισσονόμου βιοτᾶς*, the words would mean that the laws of the city ruled everything, an idea that sounds very Greek and even constitutional. From the attitude of the chorus throughout with regard to the ships and the daring of the young king it seems likely that for the *Pistoi* the word *νομίσματα* might apply especially to the traditional character of their civil institutions and then one might translate: "lawful traditions held sway." This is quite in keeping with their general appraisal of Persian rule throughout the play.

of the rule of Darius is that the soldiers returned from wars unharmed and victorious. Clearly this is a reflection of their own consciousness under the present circumstances. There follows a thirty-five line enumeration¹ of the cities subjugated by Darius and maintained by him. The idea of such conquest was natural to the Persian counsellors and for them imperial subjugation too was a part of royal wisdom, but even here they insist that Darius took these cities without crossing the Halys River and without leaving his own hearth. The keynote of the whole praise of Darius' rule is success, and here the past success is effectively opposed to present failure. In order to appreciate the dramatic perfection of this transition between the exit of the old king and the entrance of the young monarch it is necessary to re-read the chorus with the eyes of a Xerxes. His armies had failed and the greatest part of them had not even returned; he had violated tradition; he had lost the Ionian cities. Every word in the chorus was dictated by the actual condition of the Persian Empire of that time. The conclusion of the epode is a masterly one, for just as the Pistoi remark that previously invincible strength was present to them, but now they are conquered, Xerxes, the defeated, unsuccessful monarch enters.

A real characterization of Xerxes is not given in the scene that follows, for it was made clear before he appeared with his torn royal robe and desperate lamentation. He appears only to serve as the center of the final scene in which the chorus gathers around him and addresses him with their threnos. The action of the play is over and the tragedy concludes with the type of lamentation that resembles older poetry, if not ritual it-

¹This long list of cities is branded by Paley as "dull and pedantic" and he even doubts whether the whole of the stasimon is from Aeschylus. Such an observation might lead to the elimination from the text of Aeschylus such passages as Prometheus' story of the wanderings of Io, where the long list of places and landmarks makes the spectator realize the length of Io's journey, and at the same time pleases the audience with the geographic knowledge of the sophist Prometheus. One would have to suspect also the enumeration of the Persian leaders at the opening of the Persians, where the strange sounding names coming one after the other serve to emphasize the magnificence of Persian power. Far from rejecting the list of Ionian cities here, then, an interpreter might better recognize another example of this same technique and observe that the quantity of cities named gives a convincing picture of the imperial success of Darius.

self.¹ The custom of making such a lamentation may be hinted at in Tyrtaeus,² when he says of the fallen warrior: "He will be lamented by young and old." Such thrēnoi must have been traditional with the old form of tragedy and were probably connected with the origin of tragedy and older choric poetry. The dithyramb from which Aristotle derives tragedy³ must have taken the form of lamentation for a hero; for example, the tragikoi choroi in honor of Adrastus, performed at Sicyon,⁴ were in memory of his death and therefore must have been of a threnodic nature. Compare too the similar conclusion of the Seven against Thebes.

The first words of Xerxes have to do with Moirā and the daimōn, but as he beholds his faithful counsellors he becomes conscious of his own terrible responsibility and wishes that he too had died in battle. Although his mother had assured the Pistoī that it was unnecessary for her son to render an account of his actions as king apparently Xerxes himself did not feel completely ἀνυπεύθυνος. The Pistoī also refer to the daimōn as they bemoan the goodly army and the men. They address Xerxes immediately as their king with all the dignity of the language of the court, but the very words make his position more unbearable. They remind him that the land cries out in mourning for its youth "slaughtered for Xerxes" and soon take up the worst kind of reproach, an enumeration of the noble warriors whose death was caused by the expedition. This list of leaders serves as an artistic companion-piece to the triumphant list at the opening of the play. The anguish of the king is increased by each item of the lament, but he makes no attempt to justify himself. Nor, on the other hand, does he refer to his own hybris. He says merely that this fate was unexpected⁵ (l. 1026), but it is clear that he

¹In connection with this point it is interesting to note that Gilbert Murray suggests that the entire drama is in the nature of "a national celebration" (Aeschylus, p. 115).

²Tyrtaeus 9. 27 (Diehl); cf. also the lamentation for Hector, Iliad xxiv.

³Aristotle Poetics iv, 1449 a.

⁴Herodotus v. 67.

⁵Cf. Suppliants 326, 357, and 908, where the element of the unexpected is also mentioned specifically. See also the synonymous use of ἀπρόοπτον πῆμα, Prometheus 1074. These words have an almost terminological sense in Aeschylus. They are connected with the Atē problem and with the fundamental distinction of the two different meanings of Atē discussed by W. Jaeger in "Solons Eunomie," Sitzungsberichte der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, LXXIV (1926), 75.

is aware that the disaster is his and the lament is directed by him. He maintains throughout the scene a certain dignity¹ which marks him as conscious of his place among his subjects. It is that very consciousness which increases the tragic aspect of his situation. Xerxes is presented within the frame of eternal laws as a human being. The Great King, who might be thought of as above human measure, is reduced in the last analysis of his fate within the frame of human destiny to proper proportions subject to the laws of Moira and the daemonic powers.

¹Gilbert Murray describes him as "humiliated yet still dignified and even generous" (Aeschylus, p. 120).

CHAPTER III

ZEUS, THE DIVINE TYRANT

At the opening of the third play in which the ruler appears, the Prometheus Bound, Kratos and Bia, the tools of Zeus, are carrying out the order of the tyrant. These allegorical figures from the epic tradition are found in Hesiod.¹ Aeschylus wanted to take his figures as completely as possible from this tradition, but it is an innovation on his part to use them as characters in a play that deals with the punishment of the god Prometheus by Zeus, the ruler of the gods. It was all the more natural for him to take his figures from Hesiod because the entire figure of Prometheus himself was probably adapted from the Theogony and the Works and Days.

These two and Hephaestus, the divine smith, have been ordered by Zeus to nail Prometheus to a rock near the northern shore of Oceanus, and thus the entire drama takes place in the realm of the gods. Everything, however, is presented in a human way, the punishment itself, the sufferings of the guilty one, the organs of criminal justice, and the judge as well who has inflicted the penalty on Prometheus. There could be no tragedy among the gods unless their actions were interpreted in this anthropomorphic manner. It may be said from the beginning that in the entire drama Zeus does not appear as the omniscient and omnipotent ruler of the world and human destiny as he is pictured in the moving choruses of the Agamemnon, Ζεὺς ὅστις ποτ' ἐστίν,² and in the Suppliants, ἀναξ ἀνάκτων.³ This is the god to whom the persons of Aeschylus pray in their deepest distress, the god who is beyond all human thoughts and human understanding. That is the most sublime idea of the nature of the divine which the age of Aeschylus attained. This deity may be compared to the one god of Xenophanes, whom the poet-philosopher contrasts with the anthropomorphic gods of Homer and Hesiod, or even to the ἔν τῷ σοφόν of

¹Theogony 385 ff.

²Ll. 160 ff.

³Ll. 524 ff.

another great contemporary of Aeschylus, Heraclitus of Ephesus.

But when Aeschylus conceived the plot of a drama the scene of which was the land of the gods themselves, Zeus naturally became the ruler of the divine state, and everything that happened under his rule had to be fitted into an anthropomorphic frame in order to bring about a real action and tragic sufferings and a catastrophe that might psychologically move a human heart. Consequently there are no hymns and prayers dedicated to the highest god in the choruses of the Prometheus, as in the dramas mentioned above, but what we find in the Prometheus is a Zeus who makes his power felt permanently in the way a mortal king would exercise it against his opponents; for Prometheus is an opponent of Zeus, as is clear from his outbursts of enmity and hatred. The statement that the characters of Aeschylus do not speak rhetorically but politically can be applied to the Prometheus with especial right. The poet apparently visualized the situation, that is, the conflict of Zeus and Prometheus, from the point of view of a political observer, and the imagination of the dramatic artist then developed the plot in accordance with the inherent laws of his own political experience. The psychology of the Prometheus is centered upon the opposition of a political rebel to the autocratic policies of Zeus, who is represented as a young tyrant recently come to power. This conception of Prometheus is entirely different from that found in the two poems of Hesiod, where Prometheus is portrayed as one of the "great sinners" of the dynasty of Iapetus,¹ although even there he appears as the one among them whose sufferings more than those of the others touch the heart of the observer. It is one of the greatest innovations of the dramatist as compared with the theological conception of the Hesiodic epics that he has transformed the somewhat one-sided action, consisting of the sinner's punishment, into the political conflict of the Aeschylean play; for by so doing he makes Prometheus offer real resistance to Zeus, a resistance that does not end with his being fettered. The external action of the drama from a physical point of view is completed in the first scene, in which Prometheus is impaled, but the sufferings he has to bear open his mouth and make him burst into accusations of Zeus and his entire régime and threaten it with ruin if Zeus does not free him. This account

¹Hesiod Works and Days 47 ff.; Theogony 507 ff.

may be sufficient for the general description of the plot and the conception of the two main figures, but the entire play reflects this basic conception in countless details, and it will be the task of the following analysis to work this out exactly and to show the implications of Aeschylus' new political viewpoint.

The opening scene indicates vividly the political atmosphere in the world of the gods under the rule of Zeus. The first impression one receives is of the enormous cruelty of the punishment decreed upon Prometheus. The place of punishment is far from all civilization, so that the criminal is doomed not only to horrible suffering but also to complete isolation. Every word serves to emphasize the extreme measures that have been ordered by the tyrant. The condemned god, who is treated as a common criminal, is to be nailed to a rock. If the character of a régime is revealed by its organs, the nature of the rule of Zeus is distinctly illuminated by the attitudes of the persons sent to execute the offender. The very name of Kratos, as is often the case in Aeschylus, gives a clue to the character of the individual. The same is true of Bia, his mute companion. While these two represent the lower type of the followers of the tyrant, there is one who is better than these, a genuine god who is not a subordinate power or mere tool but a real god with real feelings. He too must conform to the will of the ruler.

One reason that the nailing of the god has been assigned to Hephaestus is that Prometheus has interfered with his competence, for he has charge of fire. There is a strict division of function in the new realm, and it is the authority of Hephaestus with which Prometheus had tampered in giving fire to mankind. Nevertheless, Hephaestus feels that Prometheus is his equal, and he hates the cruel way in which the execution must be done. Whereas his companions take a grim joy in the use of force, he is repelled by the entire business. The main motive of the conduct of such a person under tyranny is given in the words: πάντως δ' ἀνάγκη τῶνδ' ἐμοὶ τόλμαν σχεθεῖν (l. 16). He acts because he is compelled to act. Not only is Prometheus suffering but he too who seems to be free and active. It is a greater necessity, a heavier imposition that makes a man τόλμαν σχεθεῖν for what he is ἀτολμος (l. 14). Hephaestus has to struggle with his illegitimate feelings toward an adversary of the present system, for beneath the surface he feels compassion and sympathy, and he feels obliged

to express it. In his address there is both pity and fear. Before he begins his work he feels that he has to justify it, but there is no other justification than that he acts unwillingly (l. 19), even though, as a member of the higher class, he disapproves of the extreme philanthropy of Prometheus.¹

The philanthropy of Prometheus is the main motive of his disobedience to Zeus, and it is this very philanthropic tendency that arouses the new man in power. In like manner under a modern tyranny humanitarian ideas often are suspect as a weakening of the national resistance. So Kratos tells Prometheus in the first speech that the gods had to punish him in order that he learn to be contented with the tyranny of Zeus (ll. 10-11). The verb στέργειν in this context means not "to love" but "to accept." That is what the others have done, and they do not want to see others playing a more heroic rôle than they. The punishment ought to be exemplary. The word τυραννίς need not mean "tyranny" in the modern sense, but since the time of Harmodius and Aristogeiton it must have easily had an unpleasant connotation among the Athenians. Aeschylus' own experience with tyrannic forms of government was not limited to his stay at the court of Sicily.

It is because of this philanthropy that Prometheus must undergo such suffering. Like Kratos Hephaestus in speaking of the punishment mentions first the psychical cruelty of it (τῷδ' ἀπανθρώπῳ πάγῳ, l. 20) and then the various aspects of the physical strain. To Hephaestus the situation appears to be hopeless. His picturing of the heart of Zeus as obdurate is characteristic of indignant compassion. The less an individual can do the more he indulges in an amplification of another's suffering. In spite of the uselessness of such a thing, a sense of solidarity makes him want to suffer with the other. The anticipation of what Prometheus must undergo causes Hephaestus to declare that the mind of Zeus is inaccessible to appeal (Διὸς γὰρ δυσπαράιτητος φρένες, l. 34). This judgment is confirmed by the more general statement, following immediately, that everyone who has just come to power is hard (τραχύς). The psychology is excellent, since it seems to

¹David Grene, "Prometheus Bound," Classical Philology, XXXV (1940), 22 ff., analyzes the relation of Hephaestus toward Zeus in this scene as "a very pregnant piece of political allegory," in the section of his article which he calls, "Character Symbolism on the Political Level."

leave room for hope, which will make it possible for Prometheus to bear his sufferings. The line suggests that the young king will not stay as he is, that once his rule is established he will be able to afford a greater leniency.

At this point any further expression of sympathy on the part of Hephaestus is checked impatiently by Kratos, in whom such utterances arouse only contempt. Unfeeling though he is, Kratos senses that the smith is of different caliber from himself. In rather precarious times people want to be assured that they are united in their hatreds,¹ and if one of their number is too cultivated to share their hate they resent it. The less the methods of a new régime can be approved the less is such a common hatred possible and the more, consequently, are the more cultivated or sensitive members of the group distrusted by the ruthless ones.

In the dialogue between Kratos and Hephaestus, during which the execution of Prometheus is accomplished, the poet completes his introductory exposition of the political situation. The dramatic contrast between the two entirely different types of individuals carrying out the will of Zeus serves the purpose of the poet especially well. Kratos looks upon Prometheus as the betrayer of a secret upon which the power of the gods, the ruling class, depends (l. 38). From his point of view Prometheus deserves the hatred of his fellow gods because of this betrayal, and so the compassion of Hephaestus is all the more incomprehensible. Although he agrees that the tie of kinship and fellowship is strong, he insists that fear of Zeus is stronger, and here he reveals the real motive of his own obedience. As a matter of fact, Kratos, despite his scorn, trembles at the courage of Hephaestus in daring to criticize the king. Perhaps he is beginning to feel somewhat uneasy, and certainly he himself wants no part in this delay. His is a practical nature, and the hesitation of his fellow worker strikes him as senseless, since it is likely to incur the anger of Zeus and can in no way alter the situation of Prometheus. Hephaestus, on the other hand, considers

¹Cf. Eumenides 986, καὶ στυγεῖν μῖα φρενί, where to hate with one heart is the gift of the gods and one of the highest that a community can enjoy. δμόνοια was an ideal in the classical period of the Greek city state, but the new state of Zeus is still far from producing such agreement in its subjects as the dispute of Kratos and Hephaestus proves.

Kratos his inferior and rebukes him for his impertinence and lack of pity. The smith has come to hate his own art now that it must be used in the carrying out of such an order. When he wishes that his craft had been assigned to another, Kratos reminds him that every office is burdensome except to rule over the gods, for no one is free except Zeus (ll. 49-50). These two lines embody the political philosophy of Kratos: there is no liberty except that of kings. This is not a complaint, but merely a statement of fact. It is interesting to come upon these ideas in the literature of the first generation of the Athenian democracy.

After this bit of speculation Kratos seems to think that he has forgotten himself; so he quickly resumes his more bullying manner and demands that Hephaestus delay no longer lest Zeus become impatient. Here again the spirit of such a time reveals itself. Everything has to be done with speed and without hesitation. Every order must be executed with violence and force. Kratos thinks it his task to urge on Hephaestus, and he does so by an accumulation of asyndetic imperatives. He superintends every detail of the work of execution and his very words are like hammer strokes. One of his commands is of especial interest:

καὶ τήνδε νῦν πρόπασσον ἀσφαλῶς, ἵνα
μάθῃ σοφιστὴς ὦν Διὸς νωθέστερος [ll. 61-62].

It provokes a question what the σοφία of Zeus is. Prometheus is justly called σοφιστὴς here and elsewhere in the drama (ll. 506, 944) as the inventor of the arts and the supreme craftsman. But why is such a concept applied here to Zeus also? So far there has been no evidence of wisdom on the part of the king, but only force. There may be a sort of wisdom in being able to enforce one's will, or Kratos may be implying that Zeus is more shrewd than Prometheus; but the more the action of the play progresses the more the spectator is made to feel that the man in fetters has still some power and that Zeus is in a way powerless, as is always the person who must rely on force.

Any feeling or expression of sympathy for the enemy of the tyrant endangers the one who has been so bold. Kratos uses this principle as a means of intimidation. Hephaestus admits that he is constrained by necessity, but he warns Kratos not to be too violent in his admonitions. The word ἀνάγκη becomes more and more symbolic: even those not in actual fetters seem to be bound by invisible ones.

The conclusion of the scene offers a good characterization of the two actors. Kratos becomes more insolent as the work reaches its end. All the worse passions and appetites of his nature are encouraged by the spectacle of cruelty. Hephaestus, completely revolted by his task and the brutality of his companion, wants only to finish the ghastly work and be gone. Kratos cannot resist one last taunt at the nailed figure. He jeers at his helplessness and reminds him that the mortals for whose sake he is suffering are not able to help him now. With one last thrust about the irony of one who is called Prometheus being in such a situation he leaves the stage.

The condemned god, left alone on his desolate mountain crag, addresses the four elements. He calls upon nature to behold and witness the suffering that he, a god, receives at the hands of his fellow gods, and he explains:

τοιοῦνδ' ὁ νέος τυχὸς μαχάρων
ἐξηῦρ' ἐπ' ἐμοὶ θεσπὸν δεικῆ [ll. 96-97].

The word τυχὸς is of Thessalian origin and corresponds somewhat to our word "duke." It gives the line an exotic flavor and must have made the Athenian audience think of the autocratic political conditions of the region north of them.¹ The word νέος is applied throughout the play to Zeus and suggests the idea of illegitimacy. Even the verb ἐξευρίσχω is striking: the cruelty of the new ruler has made him inventive. In the next lines Prometheus refers to the act of philanthropy which caused his condemnation. Later we are to learn the details of his former plan to teach human beings to invent all sorts of arts by the fire he gave them. He emphasizes several times that though a god himself he is maltreated by the gods, all of whom he accuses of being responsible for his plight because they do not dare to object to the brutal action of their ruler. He understands that he has become the object of common hatred among all those who "enter the court of Zeus," and he seems to feel that he has been illegally disgraced by his peers because he went too far in his love for men.

After the chorus appears Prometheus has found more concrete hearers than the elements to whom he can voice his complaints. Now that he has a real audience he repeats himself and calls on them to witness his sufferings. This repetition shows

¹See Appendix.

his profound indignation and his passionate hatred of Zeus. The chorus of Oceanides represents a friendly element that offers sympathy and consolation. As descendants of Oceanus they are related to Prometheus and to the entire dynasty of the gods who were overthrown by Zeus and deprived of their former power. The compassion of the chorus has, of course, its merely human motives, and it does seem to be the very function of the tragic chorus to express pity and fear as they do, but one must not forget that here the "human" pity and fear of the deities receives its specific emphasis from the feeling of deep resentment which they must have as members of that privileged class that was expelled from its position of prominence when Zeus seized the power. From the first the maidens tearfully express their pity for Prometheus, and we remember that later in the play they recall, by way of contrast to his present misery, that happy day when they sang the marriage hymn in honor of Prometheus and his bride, Hesione (l. 557). Those days of glory they know to be past:

νέοι γὰρ οἰακονόμοι
κρατοῦσ' Ὀλύμπου, νεοχμοῖς
δὲ δὴ νόμοις Ζεὺς ἀθέτως κρατύνει.
τὰ πρὶν δὲ πελώρια νῦν ἄιστοῖ [ll. 149-52].

The verb κρατύνω suggests an absolute rule, and the phrase νεοχμοῖς νόμοις¹ is a sign that a revolution has taken place. The old laws are no longer in force, and now with young laws the tyrant rules ἀθέτως. If one compares with this the chorus of the Agamemnon in which Zeus is addressed as the great lawgiver who has given the greatest law to mankind,² one may suspect that the aspect of Zeus offered in the Prometheus is rather one-sided. It may be explained in one of two ways: perhaps he acts as he does because he is the young tyrant, or perhaps he merely appears in this light because we see the situation through the eyes of those deprived of their privileges. It is natural that those who formerly ruled should disapprove of any measure the source of which is one whom they look upon as a usurper. When they speak of the former glories which the new king has brought to naught they may

¹Cf. ἰδίους νόμοις, ll. 402-3.

²Agamemnon 177-78, τῷ πάθει μάθος θέντα κυρίως ἔχειν. G. Thomson, Prometheus Bound (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932), in his introduction, where he reconstructs the other plays of the trilogy, thinks that it was through the application of this law that Zeus and Prometheus were finally reconciled.

well be thinking chiefly of their own rights and privileges. It is this same feeling of humiliated pride that causes Prometheus to mind more than any of his physical hardships the fact that he hangs upon an open crag, a spectacle pleasing to his enemies. He would rather have been sent to the depths of Tartarus than be, as he is, a visible object of delight to his foes (ll. 152-59).

The chorus finds it hard to believe that all the gods could be so unfeeling as to take pleasure in such cruel misery, but it is willing to grant that Zeus is capable of such brutality. They echo the opinion of Hephaestus that the mind of Zeus is inflexible, when they declare:

ὃ δ' ἐπικότως αἶψ'
θέμενος ἄγναμπτον νόον
δάμναται οὐρανίαν
γένναν, οὐδὲ λή-
ξει, πρὶν ἂν ἡ κορέσῃ κέαρ ἢ παλάμαι τινὶ
τῶν δυσάλωτον ἔλῃσι τις ἀρχάν [ll. 162-66].

Here, however, the judgment about Zeus is clearly more subjective, since those expressing it are members of the family of Ouranos and consequently the objects of Zeus' inflexibility. They do not share the hope of Hephaestus, moreover, that the attitude of the ruler might become less rigorous. For them the only possibility of ending the persecution is that another using the same methods as Zeus, that is, force, might expel him from his throne. Although they do not share with Prometheus the knowledge of events which are to come, the mere mention of this possibility tends to strengthen the idea that the position of those who rule by force alone is ever insecure. The insecurity of Zeus is confirmed by the confident tone in which Prometheus prophesies that though he is now in chains the time will come when the ruler of the blessed (μακάρων πρότασις, l. 169) will be obliged to come to him in order to save his kingdom. In the heat of his indignation the god boasts that he will not succumb to either of the two chief methods of the political ruler, flattery or intimidation. The only emotion of which Prometheus is capable is a desire for revenge, and he vows that Zeus will receive no help from him until full satisfaction is made to him for all that he has suffered. The chorus, alarmed by the boldness of these threats, warns Prometheus that he is too free in his speech for a person in his position, and repeats that the heart of Zeus is inexorable. Prometheus is well aware that his enemy is formidable and that for the time being the instruments of "justice" are in his power, but he refers again,

and with equal confidence, to the day when Zeus will be eager to regain his friendship and he himself eager to bestow it once suitable terms have been arranged.¹

Since the chorus is desirous of hearing the whole story of the quarrel between the new king and their friend, Prometheus consents to give them the details of the political upheaval in the kingdom² of the gods. For the citizens of a Greek city-state the account of a revolution was an old story, and consequently there was no need for the poet to stimulate his audience by an actual description of the strife between the followers of Cronus and the advocates of Zeus. Nevertheless, the situation preceding the revolution by which Zeus seized power is pictured in a few striking lines with sufficient clarity and concreteness to make the audience understand the various implications. On the one side is the party of the gods who want to dethrone Cronus, the father of Zeus, and transfer the rule to the crown prince, who in all ages has been the leader of the political opposition in the monarchic state. All crown princes are predestined to be frondeurs. The other camp comprises the representatives of the old régime and its dignitaries. As the children of Ouranos and Chthon, the Titans, brothers of Prometheus, are unitedly behind Cronus, also a son of the same parents. There are fundamental reasons for the dissension of the two parties: the followers of the old régime believe in blind force as the only method of government. Prometheus has warned them because he knows the outcome of the quarrel foretold to him by the prophetic Themis or Gaia, his mother. Through her wisdom he has been taught that cleverness not force will at last win the victory and rule the world. Aeschylus depicts Prometheus as the only intellectual among the Titans, trying to convince his brothers that their methods are wrong, but they do not even condescend to notice his clever designs. Foreseeing their doom and failing in his attempt to save them, he does

¹Prometheus does not go so far in his hatred of Zeus as to exclude the possibility of a reconciliation. Cf. Demosthenes Against Aristocrates 122, where he says that sound people never trust their friends so entirely that they give up all means of defense in case they should attack them; nor do they hate their enemies so bitterly that a reconciliation is out of the question.

²It is interesting to note that Prometheus never refers to Zeus as king and therefore does not use the word for kingdom either. See Appendix.

not feel bound in conscience to share their downfall. As a result he makes an alliance with Zeus, to whom he offers his services of his own free will. According to his own version, it is to him that Zeus owes his victory over Cronus and the Titans, and on his advice they were hurled into the prison of Tartarus with all their followers. The seizure of power by Zeus and his party is described in realistic political colors. The new ruler at once organizes his newly acquired kingdom by assigning to the gods who had supported him their special share and competence. Aeschylus calls this νέμειν γέρα (l. 229).

It is not clear what rôle mortals were supposed to play in the new scheme of things. Since they did not belong to the ruling class of the kingdom, they can be thought of only as subjects, and the epithet *ταλαίπωροι* which they are given by Prometheus seems to indicate that their condition was a rather miserable one. The act of stealing the fire, which appeared as Prometheus' great sin in the mythical tradition as given by Hesiod, is set forth by Aeschylus in a different light. This deed, which was related in the old myth in a rather naive manner, has become in Aeschylus part of an ingenious program fostered by Prometheus, against the will of Zeus, to improve the situation of the unfortunate human subjects of the new ruler. Only later in the long *rhêsis* of Prometheus about his inventions (ll. 441 ff.) do we learn more about Aeschylus' own interpretation of Prometheus' gift to humanity. There it becomes clear that fire is made a symbol by the poet of the gift of culture, and it is this philosophy of civilization that is the innovation of Aeschylus. In his version Prometheus becomes the hero of civilization. But the social aim, so to speak, of his intervention in favor of suffering humanity is already revealed in his first report of the events that took place after Zeus came to power (ll. 231 ff.). The new tyrant did not care for man at all, but wanted to annihilate the human race and breed a new and better one. No one among the gods dared to defy Zeus with the exception of Prometheus. His act of stealing the fire and aiding humanity appears in his own words as a bold attempt to counteract the policy of the ruler. Prometheus not only gave man fire and civilization, but by doing so he implanted in his heart the hope of gradually improving his wretched lot. It is not clear whether this was a mere act of disobedience for which Prometheus was ready to take the consequences, or whether

he had hoped to win Zeus over by confronting him with an accomplished fact. At any rate, the punishment which Zeus inflicted upon him was much more severe than he had expected when he voluntarily committed his act of interference with the plan of Zeus.

It is difficult to determine the attitude of Zeus and the essence of his plan from the first play of the Aeschylean trilogy. In the Prometheus we see this plan through the eyes of Prometheus, that is, of the opponent of Zeus the king. Prometheus looks at the program of Zeus entirely in the light of his own ideal. Zeus' plan appears to him as sheer brutality, but, after all, this whole view of Zeus' government as a rule of the same methods of force that it was supposed to have replaced may well be one-sided. The issue whether and how humanity ought to be helped might from the standpoint of eternal wisdom be other than a merely sentimental one. An answer to this whole problem could be given only if we had the second and perhaps also the third play. There the plan of Zeus and the wisdom of his program may have been revealed by the poet; but even if we assume that there was such wisdom involved, it presents itself in the first play as the policy of an arbitrary and heartless tyrant. Also the cruel punishment is interpreted by Prometheus in the light of the psychology of the tyrant. For, Prometheus says, "It is a disease of tyranny not to trust to friends" (ll. 224 f.).¹

One of the first writers to understand the relation of Zeus and Prometheus correctly as a political one was the author of the second Platonic epistle.² This writer is interested in Plato's connection with Dionysius and the rôle which the philosopher played at the court of the tyrant. He takes the view that the condition of man will not improve in the states on earth until philosophy and power coincide in one and the same person. But the writer of the letter does not take the pessimistic view that sets forth if not the impossibility at least the improbability of such a coincidence. He makes Plato say to Dionysius that intellect and power, φρόνησις and δύναμις, have a natural tendency to come together, and he refers to the many examples offered by myth and poetry which prove the ardent interest of mankind of all ages in the association of wise men with men of power. As such

¹Cf. Xenophon Hiero iv. 1 and v. 1; Plato Republic 578 A.

²Second Platonic Epistle 311 A ff.

examples the writer of this epistle cites the tyrant Hiero, or Pausanias, the Spartan leader in the Persian Wars, and the poet Simonides, who was often represented by literary anecdote and legend as having had philosophical and political conversations with those powerful men, Periander, the tyrant of Corinth, and Thales, the philosopher of Miletus, Pericles and Anaxagoras, Cyrus, the Persian king, and Croesus, whose own wisdom came from Solon, then Creon and Teiresias, Minos and Polyeidus, Agamemnon and his three wise counsellors, Nestor, Odysseus and Palamedes. Then he adds that in his opinion also Prometheus and Zeus were associated in this way (ταύτηι πη) by the "first men," that is, in mythology. Since there are no traces of such a political interpretation before Aeschylus, it seems clear that the writer of the epistle sees the relation through the eyes of Aeschylus. He therefore becomes an important witness for our point of view. He was able to see the play of Aeschylus from the political point of view because his approach was determined by his interest in the phenomenon of power and wisdom always seeking each other. He also observed, however, that such friendships often end in enmity, and besides Creon and Teiresias, Agamemnon and Palamedes, he apparently thinks in this connection of Prometheus and Zeus, the combination that he places with great emphasis at the end of his series of examples.

When Prometheus has finished explaining the reasons for his plight the sympathetic Oceanides urge him to look for some way out of his present sufferings. This prepares the way for the following episode, the attempt of Oceanus to offer to Prometheus his good services as an intermediary between him and Zeus. From the outset Oceanus emphasizes that his pity for Prometheus is so great that he has taken the initiative in coming to his assistance. He insists that even apart from his relationship to Prometheus his feelings of admiration and friendship have compelled him to come. As a sign of true friendship in these times when no one trusts anyone else and as a token of sincerity he offers to aid Prometheus in any way that he may suggest. Prometheus greets the newcomer with extreme sarcasm as another who comes to enjoy his humiliation. This is a reflection of his old fear. The poet achieves a fine ironical effect by having Prometheus transfer the words used in speaking of a religious spectacle to the contemplation of his own spectacular position: ἐπόπτης; θεωρήσων; θέαμα.

He cannot resist in this bitter greeting the temptation to stress the ingratitude of tyranny, a motive which is later taken up by the chorus.

The next words of Oceanus contain the purpose of his visit: to give Prometheus some good advice. The figure of the παραινήτης is frequent in Greek poetry, but here it takes on a strictly political shade reflecting the tone set by Prometheus in his picture of the situation. The characterization of Oceanus is clear. He feels that he is in a position to give advice because he is so different from Prometheus in his views and character. He judges that the unhappy situation is a necessary consequence of Prometheus' unyielding and self-willed attitude toward Zeus, and he thinks he can show him a solution if he is willing to change his ways and accept good counsel. Apparently he does not understand that Prometheus has defied the command of Zeus voluntarily because he felt he could not do otherwise. Oceanus does not realize that Prometheus could not change his own character, but that is exactly what he now demands of him. The opening admonition is γίγνωσκε σεαυτόν (l. 309), a reflection of the famous γνῶθι σεαυτόν, where σεαυτόν has the connotation of human weakness. That this is the meaning of Oceanus' words and that he is indeed quoting the famous gnomē is proved by the rest of the same sentence (καὶ μεθάρμοσαι τρόπους νέους), "and adopt new ways, for a tyrant rules among the gods" (ll. 309-10). The change of character which he suggests to Prometheus is thus explicitly referred to the necessity of everyone's adapting himself to the new order of things and to the new political spirit that pervades the realm of Zeus. Compared to the αἰθαδία of Prometheus, Oceanus appears as the born man of compromise. The motive that he offers is the same as appears in the reflections of Hephaestus on the present situation: the individual must yield to force. He certainly foretells correctly that if Prometheus continues to provoke his powerful enemy by his sharp words Zeus will hear of it even if he is far away, and the double torture which he will send upon him will make his present sufferings seem like child's play. The uncompromising fanatic is advised to try to find a remedy for his present misfortunes. Oceanus reverses the heroic moral of a later poet: tu ne cede malis sed contra audentior ito. He advises Prometheus to yield to the present evils and not to kick against the goad, since he must recognize finally that a rough monarch and one not responsible

(οὐδ' ὑπεύθυνος,¹) to anyone is now ruling (l. 324).

Oceanus senses that convincing as his logic is from the standpoint of self-preservation his moral position is weak, especially in the eyes of Prometheus, who is suffering all his tortures voluntarily. He admits that his advice seems outmoded at a time of such heroic martyrdom and calls himself a "teacher" of his opportunistic wisdom, a word that contains the unpleasant connotation of the pedant who knows better, and his whole speech is full of sentences that reflect the same idea.

Prometheus persists in his ironic vein. He congratulates Oceanus for not being under accusation himself, since, as Prometheus hints in one brief line (l. 331) which leaves unanswered many questions, Oceanus had been bold enough to participate in Prometheus' rebellious action. We do not know whether this means open conspiracy or merely secret support given to Prometheus. But, at any rate, Aeschylus wants to represent Oceanus consistently as the type of person, so well known in times like those described, that is anxious to come to terms with the new power because he feels himself exposed by his former relations with the deposed rulers. This does not exclude Oceanus' being a good-hearted fellow. The very combination of this quality with his clever opportunism and willing political adaptation constitutes the type. He is ready to use his new influence with Zeus, in which his naïveté makes him believe, in favor of Prometheus, who cannot help recognizing Oceanus' good will, even though he does not foresee the success of an ill-timed interference that can only make Oceanus unpopular with Zeus. The only advice he has for a man of Oceanus' type is that he keep his mouth closed and stay out of the conflict. Prometheus is the heroic rebel who takes the consequences of his own action upon himself voluntarily because his character does not allow him to do otherwise, but who does not wish others to become involved in his sufferings because he feels that they would not be a match for them. It would be no comfort for him if as many others as possible suffered along with him. There emerges in his memory the picture of another Titanic rebel who rose up against the tyranny of Zeus, Typhon, he who plotted to destroy the tyranny of Zeus by force and was smashed by the divine thun-

¹Cf. Persians 213, where the same word is used. Its use in that passage is discussed on p. 28.

derbolt and buried beneath Mt. Aetna. Prometheus seems to enjoy picturing to himself the dynamic force of the defeated rebel still visible in the streams of fire and clouds of smoke which he sends up through the crater of Aetna.

Referring to this example, Prometheus warns Oceanus to rescue only himself and to let him bear his unfortunate lot. He does not accept the objection of Oceanus that words may be the remedy for the illness of wrath, since he knows that everything depends on the right moment, which cannot be timed by moral idealism. So finally Oceanus departs with the feeling of having made a noble effort, which apparently contributes to his own well-being. The whole scene could not have been written without a knowledge of the various types of human character that come to the foreground in times of political upheaval. The chorus which follows introduces an element necessary in a situation like this: the compassion of those who have been the object of Prometheus' care and of his daring attempt to help them, that is, mortals. The Oceanides express their own feelings by reflecting the sympathy of men who are not present in the tragedy as acting persons. These mortals are represented as being deeply affected by the punishment inflicted on their savior. Aeschylus mentions a number of nations supposed to have inhabited the countries neighboring the place of Prometheus' suffering. The general atmosphere indirectly subserves the characterization of the ruler and the tense situation caused by his tyrannic act. In this passage the chorus for the first time directs our attention to the relation that existed between Prometheus and mankind. Thus far we have learned only from Prometheus' own words that he is suffering because he interfered with the rule of Zeus in order to improve the lot of men. His words ἐκὼν ἐκὼν ἤμαρτον οὐκ ἀρνῆσομαι (l. 266) have aroused our interest in the motive of his action, which meant the sacrifice of his position in the new order and all the power which he had acquired by his cleverness and foresight during the revolution.

Prometheus tells the chorus in the long speech that follows about the assistance which he gave to mortals by enumerating all his inventions in favor of the human race, which thus far had lived a troglodytic life. He reveals more clearly than could be done by direct assurances that love for suffering men was the real motive of these inventions as well as of his daring indepen-

dent action. The arts which he cites as created by himself all pertain to the improvement of human life. They are the arts which in ancient philosophical theories about the beginnings of civilization constitute the foundations of common life in a polis: the art of building dwelling-places instead of living separately in dark caves, the knowledge of the seasons, of numbers and of letters, the domestication of the beasts that now become the servants of man, the art of medicine and of foretelling the future and investigating the will of the gods, and, finally, the use of metals as a means of trade. In their entirety they represent what the Greeks called the πολιτικός βίος, even though one factor seems to be missing, that which Protagoras in his myth about Prometheus calls the political gift par excellence, αἰδώς and δίκη.¹ There they are given to humanity as the gift of Zeus. This opens up a perspective that one would like to pursue. It is not clear whether this speech of Protagoras derived this additional feature from the continuation of Aeschylus' trilogy, for in the Prometheus there exists no hint that points in this direction; but even so there can be no doubt that this entire scene, which impresses the modern reader as more human than political must have contained for a Greek audience the clue to Prometheus' political attitude and his bold rebellion. As he had, according to his own introductory words in this same scene (l. 339), carried the burden of organizing the distribution of power and functions among the gods in the new realm of Zeus, so he wanted to build up the life of the other part of the realm, the human, on a new basis. His work, therefore, means more than the creation of technical civilization. He represents his services to humanity definitely as a part of his entire political program, which he had urged the young monarch to accept; and it was the tragedy of Prometheus that only half of it was actually accepted.

The chorus feels, like Hephaestus, that Prometheus has gone too far in his attempt to help mankind καί ποῦ πέρα (l. 507). The tragic element is that Prometheus' attempt was not made at the right moment, and the emphasis placed on the right moment accords very well with the political situation in which the poet framed the plot. We are not astonished, therefore, that the scene culminates in a decidedly contrasting political picture of Zeus

¹Plato Protagoras 322 C ff.

and Prometheus. The chorus is sure that in spite of the present failure of Prometheus' plan the creative power which he revealed in his acts as inventor and founder of civilization will elevate him finally to a power equal to that of Zeus. We must not take these words as mere hyperbole. Prometheus certainly takes them literally when he answers that the hour has not yet come to bring this about, that is, to overthrow the kingdom of Zeus. There exists, he tells them, one thing stronger than creative genius (τέχνη), namely, necessity (ἀνάγκη), the pilots of which are the three Moirai and the Erinyes who do not forget. Even Zeus is weaker than the power of necessity, and Prometheus hints that in the laws of that necessity there is not written an eternal rule of Zeus. His hearers understand that in the present atmosphere of conspiracy and enmity the words of Prometheus imply the knowledge of a secret weapon.¹ They hardly dare to ask whether he really has such a secret upon which the rule or ruin of Zeus will finally depend. Prometheus commands them to turn their thoughts to other questions, for the hour is not yet ripe for the revelation of the secret which he guards and which finally, if kept securely, will rid him of his fetters. The chorus cannot add one word to this warning and prophecy, but the strong reaction which Prometheus' words evoke in the mind of the Oceanides reflects, besides the admiration for Prometheus' deep love of man and for his heroic boldness, again the feeling that he went too far. It is a particularly feminine feature in the following song of the chorus that they contrast Prometheus' self-willed action, which tried to cross the plan of Zeus, with their own willingness to bow before the monarch's boundless power and to give him all the reverence due to him. They would rather bring their offerings and sacrificial meals to Zeus near the stream of their father, Oceanus, than offer opposition to him. More than in any other passage of the play Zeus appears here as the god whom Aeschylus reverently portrays in the plays where he expresses his own faith; and the Oceanides indeed seem to represent human religious feelings. They want to spend their life in humility and harmless joy. The sight of the suffering Prometheus, who tried in vain to put

¹David Grene, op. cit., p. 29, rightly calls the knowledge of this secret "a symbol of the ultimate superiority of knowledge over force."

his own will against the will of Zeus and now is left alone by the weak, ephemeral human creatures he had befriended, makes them feel that it is impossible for anyone to destroy the unshakable order of Zeus.

There has been much dispute about the lack of motivation in the Io episode of the Prometheus, and certainly there is no psychological motivation for the entrance of a person hitherto not mentioned in the play or in any way connected with the story of Prometheus. But in the Aeschylean art there are other ways of motivation than those found in modern poetry; and seen from a higher point of view the meeting of the tragic figures of Io and Prometheus at this moment is perfectly logical and produces a full harmony of the two separate impressions. The harmony in which they both cooperate is the experience of the brutality of Zeus' tyranny, which is shown in the Io episode from an entirely different angle. The love story of the unfortunate Argive princess, daughter of King Inachus, is revealed by her response to Prometheus' questions. Zeus had sent her dreams telling her of his love and ordering her not to reject the "highest marriage" but to go out to the Lernaean meadows near the stables of her father's cattle, where Zeus would come to her. Because the maiden was reluctant, her own father had been instructed by the oracle of Pytho and Dodona to expel her from his house and land to the ends of the earth, and it was threatened that the lightning of Zeus would strike his roof and annihilate his house if he did not obey this demand. The "bridle of Zeus" (l. 672) compelled him to do so, and, transformed into a horned cow, Io wandered through many lands. It is unnecessary to go through the long geographical enumeration of countries, rivers and mountains that, according to Prometheus, Io will cross in her further journey until finally, having reached the land of the Nile, she will feel the hand of Zeus, which by its mere touch will restore her sanity of mind, and will give birth to the child Epaphus, named after the miraculous way in which it was begotten by Zeus. From him the Danaids will be descended and will return to Argos to produce a new dynasty, from which there will be born a hero famous for his bow, the great Hercules, who will free Prometheus from his bonds. There is much mystery in the story of Zeus' love for Io that must have made it difficult for Aeschylus' religious feeling and αἰδώς to bring it to the stage. But how could he fail to make

use of this example of the tyranny of Zeus, which is thus given a characterization from a new point of view? At all times autocrats were described as using brutal force in order to fulfill their desires, and as taking away from their parents the maidens they coveted. Thus the Io episode adds a typical feature to the characterization of Zeus the tyrant. The following chorus pities the beautiful Io, who has to suffer the tragedy of the girl who does not marry in her own rank, as the proverb goes, but is elevated to an honor for which she has to pay too great a price.

The Io episode has still a second function in the structure of the drama. It foreshadows another love story of Zeus which, as Prometheus knows from his prophetic mother, Themis, will result in the downfall of the tyrant. In this way the curse of his father Cronus, whom he hurled from his throne, will be fulfilled. At the opening of the following scene Prometheus boasts that he is the only one who can show Zeus how to escape. In the proud consciousness of the possession of this secret power over his enemy Prometheus with scornful words challenges new and impotent outbursts of Zeus' hatred and applications of brute force, the only means at his command, for from this new marriage of Zeus and Io will spring a scion who will destroy the lightning of Zeus. At that moment, the anticipation of which will enable Prometheus to bear in patience all his tortures, Zeus will come to know the difference between tyranny and slavery. Prometheus pays no attention to the warnings of the chorus, who predict a new outbreak of Zeus' anger, and he scorns their advice to bow to the ruler's tyranny. In this frenzy he even taunts their wisdom and, conscious of his divine immortality, which prevents Zeus from destroying him, he sees in his exaggerated imagination the age-long rule of Zeus over the world dwindle into a brief period. The tyrant will not long maintain his domination of the gods. At this point we seem to be able to visualize the complete victory of intellect over brutal force, for the powers of intellect are free even if they are in fetters.

Hermes, the messenger of the gods, appears almost immediately after Prometheus looses his invective toward the heavens, and he addresses Prometheus with words that illustrate the way in which the entourage of Zeus looks at him. He addresses him as the σοφιστής (l. 944), the philosophic individualist who in the consciousness of his superior intelligence opposes even the high-

est ruler. He calls him δ πικρὸς ὑπέρπικρος, referring his rebellious attitude to his cantankerous temper. He is the man who has offended the gods by giving their honors away to the ephemeral human race, and Hermes calls his noble act thievery. His first words proclaim: "Our father orders you to surrender the secret of your threats, by which you say that he is in danger of losing his domination." He then refers to the effectiveness of the punishments employed by Zeus. Prometheus scorns Hermes as the servant of the gods and finds his solemn and pompous words not in keeping with the nature of a slave. Thus far there has been no direct declaration by Prometheus to Zeus or the organs of his might. When Hephaestus, Kratos and Bia were present he was silent, but now that he is explicitly addressed by the messenger of Zeus he declares that he does not care for Zeus and his commands; he does not fear him and he will not bow before any of the new gods. The word "new" occurs again and again in his answering speech. "You are new," he declares to Hermes and the other gods, "and new is your power. Therefore you imagine that you will dwell in the palace of heaven eternally. I have seen during my lifetime two tyrants expelled from it, and I shall live to see the third and present one expelled disgracefully and soon" (ll. 955 ff.). Hermes tries to change his mind by reminding him that it was by such arrogance that he arrived at his present misfortune. Prometheus' revolutionary mood is displayed in his answer: "And yet I would not like to exchange my misfortune for your serfdom" (ll. 966 f.). Hermes does not understand how Prometheus can think it better to be the slave of the hard rock than to be the faithful messenger of Father Zeus. The word "faithful" shows the principle on which Zeus' political system is built: it is not a system of legal rights but of personal loyalty. Zeus is called Father repeatedly by Hermes, and this reminds us that also in the first scene he was given this appellation by Kratos (l. 45) and Hephaestus (l. 53). The character of the rule of Zeus seen through the eyes of his followers is not at all tyrannical but patriarchic. Although the poet does not reveal Zeus' own idea of the principles of his rule, he seems to think it necessary to give at least these hints at the beginning and end of the drama about the manner in which one belonging to the other camp might interpret the situation. The dialogue of Hermes and Prometheus offers an excellent opportunity to display the two opposing points of view.

Hermes wants at the same time to keep his countenance as the representative of the power of Zeus and to soothe Prometheus' anger in order to achieve the end of the mission he has undertaken. Prometheus, feeling this, makes use of Hermes' patience to rid himself of all his hatred and contempt. As we sense it, this is the one short moment of his highest triumph, and it gives him a profound satisfaction to be the stronger one although he is in the hands of his enemy. When Hermes has convinced himself that he is talking to the waves of the sea, as Prometheus puts it (l. 1001), and that it is impossible to intimidate the culprit by the general threat of new force, he proceeds to announce the system of new tortures which will be applied from now on to break the seemingly inexhaustible moral resistance of the rebel. At the end of this menacing speech he adds that this is not mere bluff but that the mouth of Zeus does not know how to speak anything but the truth. The chorus, although ready to be destroyed with Prometheus, as its deeds soon prove, asks Prometheus to give up his challenging attitude and listen to the wise advice of his own εὐβουλία. The maidens insist that a wise man ought not to let himself be provoked by the deeds of his enemies to take the wrong step, but Prometheus remains unshaken. He anticipates the most terrific onslaughts of all the elementary forces of heaven and earth, and foresees that he will be catapulted into their whirlpool but they will not destroy him. This rebel is at the same time an immortal god, and this insures his triumph; many a human rebel might envy him his immortality. To Hermes his lack of obedience appears sheer madness, and he tries to separate Prometheus and the women who bravely support him in this grave hour in which he must fight the whole world. Their presence must be a great comfort and encouragement for Prometheus. It would be at least a partial success of Hermes' mission to tell Zeus that he had intimidated them and kept them from sharing Prometheus' lot. When the Oceanides tell him that they would never become traitors because that is what they hate more than anything else, he warns them that they are consciously running into the net of Atē, and that those in power must decline any responsibility for their becoming involved in Prometheus' doom. According to Hermes, their loyalty is stupidity (ἄνοια, l. 1079). The last lines of the play are the outcry of Prometheus, who invokes his mother's majesty in calling her to witness his unjust torture, the beginning

of which is heralded by the thunder and lightning of Zeus. A quotation from Prometheus the Torchbearer tells us that in that play Prometheus said he had been imprisoned in the depths of Tartarus for thirty thousand years.¹

Thus Aeschylus consistently makes use of the political setting that he gives to the Prometheus myth. The proportions, of course, are enlarged from human to divine conditions. Crime and punishment are appropriate even to a system the ruler of which is not a human being but the king of the gods. The way in which Aeschylus carries out his idea proves that he was able to give the plain facts of the myth life and blood only on account of his own political experience. It would be going too far to try to conclude from the evidence of the one drama what was Aeschylus' own political ideal. His experience only provides him with the necessary psychological and political devices to build up his plot. The modern way in which he represents the old myth is an important contribution to the understanding of the actual political issues of Aeschylus' own time; but it is even more important to see how these great issues determine the poet's imagination and general view of human life. The main question, however, which remains is how the political aspect of Zeus' government was developed by Aeschylus in the following parts of his trilogy. It is not our intention to enter into a discussion of the possibility of reconstructing the other plays.² The very fact that Prometheus was finally freed implies his reconciliation with Zeus. The Titans, as we learn from a preserved fragment,³ appeared in Prometheus Unbound in a rôle similar to that of Oceanus and the Oceanides of the first play. They visit Prometheus to tell him that their bonds were removed by Zeus. Thus Prometheus has to suffer longer than those whom he had abandoned in order not to share their doom. The conditions of the reconciliation are unknown to us, but we may assume that the prophecy of Prometheus came true:

ἔσται ποθ', ὅταν ταύτη βασιθεῖ
τὴν δ' ἀτέραμνον στορέσας ὀργὴν
εἰς ἀρθμὸν ἐμοὶ καὶ φιλόττητα
σπεύδων σπεύδοντί ποθ' ἤξει [ll. 189-92].

¹See scholium on Prometheus 94.

²For a detailed study of the Prometheus trilogy see Franz Stoessl, Die Trilogie des Aischylos (Baden bei Wien: Rohrer, 1937), pp. 114 ff.

³Fragment 190 (Nauck).

CHAPTER IV

ETEOCLES, THE SOLDIER-KING

The Seven against Thebes is, as Aristophanes¹ has said, a drama "Ἀπὸς μεστών, and therefore Eteocles, the fourth of the Aeschylean monarchs, offers us an opportunity to discover the poet's idea of the ruler as the military leader of his people. The scene of this third play of the trilogy by which Aeschylus gained first prize in the year 467 B.C. is the city of Thebes, a city about to be attacked by an Argive host led by Polynices, the brother of the king. As the play opens, Eteocles is addressing an assembly of the citizens already under arms and convened to hear the words of their leader in this time of war. The entire speech proves that the ruler is completely aware of the responsibility of his position and the importance of his function at this critical moment in the history of the country. His first words are essential:

Κάδμου πολῖται, χρῆ λέγειν τὰ καίρια
ὅστις φυλάσσει πρόαρος ἐν πρύμνῃ πόλεως
οἴακα ναμῶν, βλέφαρα μὴ κοιμῶν ὕπνῳ: [ll. 1-3].

Speaking to them as citizens of a common polis, he calls their attention to himself by picturing the one who guards the affairs of the city as an untiring pilot of the ship of state.² He states that it is the chief work of such a pilot to say the right word and take the right step at the decisive moment. In spite of the idealism of this picture, his view of his position is a realistic one since he knows and tells them quite frankly that when everything goes well the gods are praised and given the credit for prosperity, whereas when misfortune comes, it is the king to whom the citizens address their "hymns" of lamentation. The concept of

¹Aristophanes Frogs 1021.

²This same metaphor was used by Aeschylus in line 341 of the Suppliants. Its usage there and in other Greek literature was discussed in our interpretation of that play. Line 2 is the one quoted by Socrates in Plato Euthydemus 291 D.

καίρῳ is fundamental in the consideration of the qualities of any leader for the success of any political or military enterprise depends first of all on his ability to act unerringly and unhesitatingly at any given moment.¹

Having defined his own position the king turns the minds of his subjects to their own present responsibility to the state. It is necessary for them all, young and old alike, to go to the defense of their city and their national gods, in order to insure their honors. Here, as in the Suppliants and Agamemnon, there is an immediate association of the city and the gods of the city. It is as if only one idea were involved. It is interesting to note too the inter-relation of the gods and the citizens. Although the gods are called upon to protect the state and its inhabitants, the very motive of the fighting men is to preserve the altars and worship of these "protecting" deities. Eteocles reminds them next that they must fight in behalf of their children, and finally that they must go to the help of the motherland who nurtured them as little children, who took upon herself the burden of their education,² and who made them able to become shield-bearers, faithful to their duty in this very crisis. That the crisis is at hand has been disclosed to the king by the seer Tiresias, who has warned him that the enemy is planning a general assault. The figure of the ruler is associated with that of the seer also in Sophocles' Oedipus the King and in other plays. It shows the close relation of politics and religion from another side: the active cooperation of their representatives in any practical situation. The confidence of the soldiers whose duty it is to obey the king is increased by the knowledge that his orders

¹It is this relation of the advice given by a ruling statesman to the καίρῳ that Thucydides i. 22. 1 means by his famous words: περὶ τῶν δὲ παρόντων τὸ δέοντα εἰπεῖν. He too wants the orations in his work to represent the speaker in a specific situation as λέγων τὸ καίρια. In his classical characterization of Themistocles, i. 138. 3, he expresses the same idea by the words, τῶν τε παραχρήμα δι' ἐλαχίστης βουλῆς κράτιστος γνῶμων. In the same paragraph note also, κράτιστος αὐτοσχεδιάζειν τὸ δέοντα. Demosthenes De corona 172 portrays himself as the ideal political leader who knew what to do in the decisive hour.

²Cf. the similar passage in Plato's Crito 51 A ff., where the fatherland is said to deserve greater reverence and gratitude than parents. Note especially 51 C, where the laws of the polis appear and they are spoken of as γεννήσαντες ἐκθρέψαντες παιδεύσαντες (τὸν πολίτην).

are in keeping with the predictions of the official prophet of the city. After his exhortation the king orders the soldiers to man the ramparts and watch for the approach of the enemy. There will be no surprise attack because of the wise precautions of the king, who has sent his scouts to provide him with information about every move of the hostile troops. A remark to this effect reassures the Thebans as they hurry to their posts and at the same time motivates the entrance of the scout who reveals the strategic activities of the foe.

The speech of the scout, which is in reality the report of a soldier to his commanding officer, is on a high level, for the young man's information is exact and his manner toward the king respectful and eager. His appraisal of the Argives before the battle reveals his character as one upon which the monarch can rely with full confidence. We learn later in the play the importance attached by Eteocles to the process of selecting the right man for a given task, and his choice of the scout seems to prove his ability to do this. The almost noble description of the enemy makes it clear that Thebes is about to be attacked by a foe determined to die rather than to suffer defeat. Although he had not been present at the address of the king to the people the scout employs the metaphor that Eteocles himself had used. He tells his monarch to make preparation against the blasts of Ares "as the wise helmsman of a ship at sea" (l. 62). In the face of this report Eteocles realizes that, although he has done all that he could to fortify his state, the fate of the country rests with the higher powers. So, having mobilized his men, he mobilizes Zeus, Gē and the city gods, beseeching them not to send ruin upon a city that speaks the "language of Hellas" (ll. 71 ff.). Then, not content to call only upon these, he invokes Ara, the powerful Erinyes of his own father. By its boldness this addition indicates that in Eteocles are combined the common characteristics of a king and the passionate individuality of the son of Oedipus. There is a Panhellenic note in the prayer, which would not have been found in the mouth of the ruler of a Greek city-state before the Persian Wars. He concludes his prayer realistically with a reminder that he is not asking for help just for himself and his people, but that it is the common cause of the gods and the city that he prays for, since only a prosperous state is able to maintain its gods. As we have said, perhaps here more than in any of the Aes-

chylean dramas one sees the interaction of religion and the state. Yet how different is the religious attitude of the king from the frenzied emotionalism of the terror-stricken chorus, the female population of Thebes.

The terror of the Theban women is very convincingly presented by the poet in the first chorus. The metre itself contributes much to the effect and also the choice of words, but it is chiefly the juxtaposition of prayer and fear that illustrates the mental condition of these women, who represent the next problem that the king must take in hand. Alarmed by the sight and sound of the approaching enemy they have rushed to the altars to intercede for the deliverance of their city. They are so completely unnerved that they make no attempt to control their expressions. Consequently the invocations of the more resolute are interrupted constantly by some new outbursts of trepidation. Even in the prayers fear is predominant and their tone has more desperation in it than faith. Without discrimination they call upon whatever deity comes to mind. It is not until the end of the litany that they begin to organize their thoughts, but even when they are able to remind the gods of the former homage paid to them they are seemingly without confidence. This, then, is the new problem for the king: how to calm these half-mad women whose cowardice is already on the way to undermining the general morale. One learns from the next scene that although Eteocles can direct and inspire his men with success his knowledge and experience in feminine psychology is not on the same level. As a matter of fact, he makes no attempt to employ psychology in his treatment of the chorus, but rather maintains throughout his dealings with them his completely masculine outlook. His concern is only with the general welfare of the country, the safety of which depends in this hour upon the bravery of its fighting forces. When he sees that the fears of his feminine subjects are likely to weaken the courage of the citizens his course is clear. The women must be silenced directly and forcefully. He begins with a declaration that since their conduct is a discouraging element they are like traitors aiding the enemy. After expressing his personal contempt for women under all circumstances he states that anyone who does not listen to his commands will be stoned to death. The women in reply plead that they were overcome by fear and try to defend themselves by saying that they had only come to ask the

gods to protect the city. Thus there arises a dispute between the king and the women about their right of free expression of feeling. To the women this is legitimate because they express their fear by turning to the gods with their prayers. To the king that fact does not justify this public utterance of dismay, which tends to destroy the discipline so essential in the prevailing situation. The king as well as the chorus goes too far: the women neglect the necessity of keeping discipline even in prayer; Eteocles minimizes the value of religious faith in a time like this, and insists that if the city is captured the gods will not help them at all but will leave the city. The women seek refuge in god as the absolute being to whom the individual turns in extreme need. The king considers the gods in connection with the state, which maintains its cults as part of its political institutions. There is for the king a temptation to doubt the efficacy of prayers, at least when made by women in the present situation. His principal thought is that discipline is better than excited prayer. When the chorus answers that god may work a miracle where human power is helpless he tells them impatiently that everything necessary to insure the favor of the deities ought to be done by men who make the formal sacrifices. He refers to the solemn offerings made before the battle starts. It is interesting to observe that here too his concern is with the institutional side of religion, by which it is interwoven with the political order of the state, but he is sceptical with regard to free religious expression, which in his speech becomes a subterfuge for dangerous individualism. The chorus profits by the exaggeration of the king's political view-point and asks whether it is not just to implore the divine protectors without fear of blame; that is, they want to know whether the mere fact of their praying for help, far from being a patriotic duty, is actually a reason for political indignation. The king is forced to withdraw and concedes that the women are free to honor the gods, but he does impose restrictions upon their expression of despair and fear. This is a more tenable position and the one which he maintains from that point on. In this scene the king is almost overmasculine. The poet tries throughout the drama to make him a truly heroic figure, a ruler who knows nothing but the welfare of his country, an unselfish monarch and so no tyrant according to Plato and Aris-

tote.¹ However, in this encounter with his female subjects his manliness is one-sided as he endeavors to apply his authority in order to make the common interest prevail. Even though he feels he is justified in using almost any measure in a time of emergency, his tactics here reveal his shortcomings, especially when one realizes that he is trying to cope with "one-half of the free population."² It is impossible for him to understand how the women turn to the gods as their only help and he is baffled as to why their appeal to the supernatural must be so emotional and unbalanced. What he wants of them is only moral resistance; he therefore looks at their religious outbursts from the rational view-point that they are insidious because they spread fear, confusion, and despair. His way is to do everything that is humanly possible, while they in their femininity are inclined to neglect the duty of discipline. When he presents this idea to them and reminds them of the old saying that obedience is the mother of prosperity and the wife of the savior (ll. 224-25), they begin to philosophize as they reassert their belief in a higher power. The radical antithesis between man, who looks first to order and the state, and woman, who tends to look toward higher irrational forces, reminds one of the Bacchae of Euripides, where the same problem is dealt with. In spite of this fundamental conflict in the Seven the king finally succeeds in making the women agree to cooperate in the present task of defending the city by keeping silence. Instead of forbidding them to pray he recommends that they invoke the gods as "allies" (l. 267). His psychology improves as he reverts to the manner that he used with the men in

¹Cf. Aristotle's view, Politics iii. 7, 1279 a 28, and Newman, The Politics of Aristotle (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1887), I, 215. Aristotle makes the ruler's care for the common good the criterion of good rule and by it distinguishes good constitutions from corrupted ones. Newman compares with this view the passage in Plato Laws 715 B, where the common good is also made the mark of a good constitution, and seems to separate this passage from Plato's statements in Republic 449 A ff. and Politicus 292 A. There good rule is made dependent upon the ruler's possession of true political knowledge. But since the object of that political knowledge according to Plato is the good there is no essential difference between the three works quoted. Whether the ruler is one person or few or many does not make any difference to Plato.

²Aristotle Politics i. 13, 1260 b 19 calls the women of the polis "one-half of the free people."

the first scene. He gives the women something definite to do, ordering them to intone a martial paean, in accordance with the Hellenic tradition, to inspire the army with confidence and the enemy with fear. Moreover, he cleverly assures them that he will make a vow to the city gods, the protectors of the countryside and the guardians of the market-place, the gods of the sacred sources and the river of Thebes, promising abundant offerings of thanksgiving when the city has been rescued; he adds that he will decorate the temples with the trophies taken from the foe. In so doing he soothes the wild emotions of the chorus and makes the women feel with some satisfaction that they might contribute to the salvation of their country by praying and singing in the right way.

The following chorus (ll. 287-368) begins with the word μέλει, that is, μέλει μοι τῶν ἐπιταχθέντων. It is thus supposed to be the contribution of the women that the king has asked them to make, but, as a matter of fact, the second word is not in keeping with the order that they agreed to obey, for it is a reversion to their expressions of fear, and the entire chorus from that first line on indulges in a series of pitiful pictures of the present danger and the sufferings of defeat, destruction, and slavery. The moving visions of their fearful imaginations are put in the form of a prayer according to the tradition of tragic choruses,¹ but the expected paean does not appear at all in the strophes.

We come now to the central scene from which the drama receives its name, the Seven against Thebes. The scout interrupts the songs of the chorus by his reappearance and he prompts the king, who had retired after line 268, to come forth in order to listen to this new report. In his last words in line 282 Eteocles had announced his intention of posting six leaders, with himself as the seventh, at the seven gates of Thebes, for they had learned from the first words of the scout in line 55 that the seven dukes of the Argive army had decided to attack the gates. The coincidence in numbers seems to have captivated the imagination of the poet and to have offered him an idea, for he has based the struc-

¹This is entirely natural since the tragic chorus took its form very often from prayer and through it gave expression to all sorts of emotions by word, melody, and dance.

ture of the chief scene of the play on this principle. In this scene the scout gives the details which he has discovered in the meantime about the person of each of the seven attackers and the gate which each has been appointed to assail. His long report is in seven parts. After each part, containing the characterization of one of the seven leaders, Eteocles interrupts to announce which of his men he intends to send to that particular gate. The stiff archaic symmetry of this form of composition is even more emphasized by the fact that after each of these seven pairs of speeches the chorus says a few words. The speeches of the chorus have five lines each, except that the seventh, which is concerned with the person of Eteocles himself, has six lines and leads up to the dramatic dialogue between king and chorus. Parallel to the symmetry of form in the seven triads of speeches is the symmetry of thought expressed in them. After the scout has described one enemy the king names the corresponding defender and the chorus always comes in as an echo of the monarch's words.

In all of these speeches (ll. 375-682) the king appears mainly as the commander of his army who takes the necessary measures with perfect poise and circumspection in the midst of danger and panic. He is, as it were, the axis around which all action on the Theban side is swinging in full order, and the audience must have admired his presence of mind and his intrepid firmness. However, the poet does not want to present the element of the *καρπός* only from a military point of view. In the military steps that Eteocles takes he reveals himself as the good ruler who always takes into account the political and moral aspect of a situation. The scout characterizes the leaders of the Argives personally by describing their armor and the signs on their shields, but the characterization involves little of what one would call individual psychology. Although the tragedian has striven for some variety the pictures of the seven dukes are somewhat stereotyped. With their boasting and threatening words as well as their fierce shields the Argive heroes are presented as worshippers of blind force; their essence is hybris. Eteocles makes the Theban cause appear as that of righteousness, and the representatives of his army, as he appoints them to defend that cause, are described as individuals embodying andreia combined with sōphrosynē. Only one of the enemy, Aphiarus the seer, differs from his fellow warriors. He is represented (l. 610) as

possessing all the four civic virtues upon which the Greek city and its order rested¹ (σώφρων δίκαιος ἀγαθὸς εὐσεβὴς ἄνθρωπος). Even so, Amphiaraus will have to atone with the others because he has shared in their hybris. The awareness of this coincidence of the Argive and Theban causes with hybris and dike in the speeches made by Eteocles is used by him deliberately to stiffen the resistance and strengthen the moral power of his army and people. In a similar way, Demosthenes² in order to encourage the Athenians in their political struggle against Philip of Macedon criticizes the Athenian statesmen who reckon only Philip's power and make him appear very dangerous, and hope thereby to make the Athenians more willing to fight. The orator's own method is a different one. He tries to show the people that Philip's power, although it seems to be tremendous at the present moment, is based on a weak moral foundation. In a thorough moral analysis of the spirit of the Macedonian ruler and his retinue Demosthenes defines it as a spirit of hybris and expresses the belief, which is in harmony with all Greek ethical tradition, that no power or success that rests on such foundations can endure for very long. Thus Eteocles appears in a way like Demosthenes in his repeated hints at the hybris of the enemy and the dikaïosynē of the Thebans; he is the political educator of his people and army in the hour of decision when such moral leadership is needed more than ever.

When the scout tells Eteocles that the seventh gate is to be stormed by his brother Polynices, the king decides to take the defense of that gate himself, for the battle, nay, the whole war, will be decided there. The women of the chorus, who have thus far accompanied every decision of their king with applause, try

¹Wilamowitz, Aeschyli tragoediae, prints this line in brackets and remarks in the apparatus that he has deleted the line because he thinks that it was interpolated by someone who wanted the four Platonic virtues to be present in Amphiaraus, which would of course date the line after Plato; but Jaeger in Paideia, p. 104, has pointed out that the so-called cardinal virtues of Plato which are to be found in the Republic and many of his dialogues were not invented by Plato, but are only the canon of political virtues of a citizen in the early Greek city-state, the development of which we can follow through several stages from Homer to the time of Attic tragedy. In the time of Aeschylus that canon was apparently definitely established and Plato took it from this old tradition.

²Olynthiac Orations 11. 3.

to prevail upon him not to bring the pollution of kin murder upon the city. They reason that there are enough others to achieve the same result. Nevertheless, for the king such a course is the only way to win eukleia, the reward of true aretē in public life. The chorus looks upon it as the way to atē; Eteocles does not deny this. He has been aware from the beginning, when he invoked Ara and the Erinyes of his father in addition to the official cult gods of Thebes (l. 70), that the curse of Oedipus is about to be fulfilled and will destroy the house of Laius, "hated by Phoebus" (l. 691). The women again look to help from prayer and tell him to turn to the gods, but Eteocles sees no possibility of divine assistance. He says:

θεοῖς μὲν ἤδη πως παρημελήμεθα,
 χάρις δ' ἀφ' ἡμῶν ὀλομένων θαυμάζεται [ll. 702-3].¹

With these words the king takes up the motive of eukleia. Since he cannot expect the aid of the gods he does not want to fawn upon imminent fate (l. 704), but chooses the way of aretē. Deserted by the deities he can still die a true hero. He does not fall a helpless victim to divine wrath, but accepts his fate in a manner that suits best the scope of his life, which is civic virtue. Of the four political virtues which he praises in Amphiaraios he certainly possesses valor, and that he appreciates justice and moderation is clear from his speeches about the hybris of the enemy. However, his eusebeia goes no further than the official homage which he as ruler must give the gods, that is, the fulfillment of his duties of sacrifice and consultation with the seer. His impersonal approach to the divine cannot be compared to that of the women, as we have already seen. Although in an ancient state religion is part of the state and the political life of the citizen, and, consequently, there cannot, as a rule, exist an official conflict between religion and the state, Aeschylus recognized that there could be some tension between the religious and the specifically political part of civic virtue. He makes us understand that Eteocles, who feels neglected by the gods, does not pay much attention to them as the vital forces which have ruined

¹Unlike Smyth in his translation of these lines I understand them to mean: "By the gods we are already ignored somehow [πως], but if I die I shall enjoy wondrous favor [among men]." The implied contrast between men and gods is much more satisfactory as an explanation of the μέν--δέ construction of the sentence.

two generations of his house and will ruin this last one. As the last and most innocent sufferer of the curse he wonders why Atē must have her way. The only way that he can avoid being a mere object and victim and remain an active moral subject is not to violate his ideal of political aretē. As king he sees in the single combat with his brother a means of saving both his personal honor and the existence of his city. He acts under the overwhelming impression of the irresistible power of the fatal curse which is going to destroy him and his brother.

The next chorus (ll. 720 ff.) shows that the personal tragedy of the royal family has diverted the attention of the women from the dangers of the war and their fear for themselves. Their thoughts are concentrated on the tragic atē which ruins one generation after the other in the Laius dynasty. There is one reference to the curse in its connection with the city (l. 764), where the chorus voices the fear that the polis may be doomed with the king. The women are freed from this fear by the messenger who announces the outcome of the battle. The Thebans, he tells them, have thrust back the attack of the enemy at six of the gates; at the seventh the sons of Oedipus have fallen by each other's hands. The city is safe, but the dynasty of the Theban kings has come to an end. The real victor is Atē, who has erected her trophy in front of the gate where the Oedipodae have slain each other. Thus the fate of the ruler and his entire house is dissolved in the human tragedy of the last scion of a mighty dynasty. The chorus (ll. 822-1004) is again dedicated to a lamentation for the tragic destiny of the royal family. Only once more when the herald appears to proclaim the decree of the Probouloi of the dēmos does Eteocles emerge in the drama as the dead ruler of his country. They have resolved to bury him with due honor in Theban earth since he proved his eunoia to his land by dying on the field of honor. His brother Polynices, who became the enemy of his country and wanted to enslave it, is to be denied a Theban burial. He shall be cursed by the gods whom he despised, religious rites will be refused him, and his body will be thrown out of the city to lie unburied. The final scene, in which Antigone and part of the chorus determine to bury the traitor in spite of the edict, anticipates in a surprising and not organic way the tragic problem of Sophocles' Antigone. If the last scene is genuine, as has been doubted by Corssen, Wilamowitz

and others,¹ the poet must have felt that he wanted the fate of the two sons of Oedipus to overshadow the glory of Eteocles, the ruler of the city. Nevertheless, the praise of the king as the savior of his people is the last word of the drama. The women, who do not share the pity of Antigone and the other women for the traitor Polynices, declare that they will follow their king and give him honor because he was the ally of dikē and the true captain of the ship of state.

¹The authenticity of the last scene was doubted by Th. Bergk, Griechische Literatur Geschichte (Berlin, 1884), III, 302; Peter Corssen, Die Antigone des Sophokles (Berlin, 1898), p. 29; U. v. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, "Drei Schlussszenen griechischer Dramen," Sitzungsberichte der Preuss. Akademie (1903), p. 436.

CHAPTER V

KINGSHIP IN THE AGAMEMNON

The first play of the Oresteia, the Agamemnon, is named for the most famous ruler in Aeschylus, a figure taken from epic tradition, where he is the outstanding leader of all the Greek chiefs in the war against Troy. There can be no doubt that Aeschylus, like Thucydides¹ and other writers of the classical period, must have taken Agamemnon as a historical person. Nevertheless, he is not the most interesting example of the type in the extant Aeschylean plays, partly because the plot allows him little opportunity to act as king, and partly because he appeals to us more from the human point of view than in his official capacity. Whereas in the other plays the tragedian had to have recourse to the typical features of a ruler in order to make up for the lack of individual characteristics in epic tradition, Agamemnon was one of the most individualized heroes in the Iliad. As in the Seven against Thebes, the whole trilogy of the Oresteia is centered about an ancestral curse which threatens and finally destroys the royal house; but since the scene of the Seven is the actual defense of the country against a powerful enemy, Eteocles, the bearer of the curse in his generation, displays his qualities as a ruler more than Agamemnon. However, even though Agamemnon is murdered soon after his return home² after a long war and has no time to act as a king in peace, he adds one new aspect to the general picture of the ruler in Aeschylus: the victorious king who returns to his country in triumph. The main emphasis of the drama is on the human tragedy of his marriage, which overshadows the glory of the victory. In fact, no other royal figure in Aeschylus appears so predominantly in the light of his private tragedy. One might say that the splendor of his victory and the enor-

¹Thucydides 1. 9. 1.

²The king does not enter until line 781, and of the 1673 lines in the play less than a hundred are spoken by him.

mous power he has won through it are used by the poet to deepen the shadow of his purely human and private fate. But even in this private tragedy the hatred and infidelity of Clytaemestra, which lead up to the murder of the king, go back in the last resort to acts which he committed as a powerful autocrat, and thus the character of Agamemnon as a ruler is involved in so far as the preliminary events that caused the present situation are reflected in the gloomy memory of the chorus and in the action of the play itself.

Of equal importance for our problem is Clytaemestra, the queen. She has governed the country in her husband's absence for many years and appears as a regal figure of manly character and will power throughout this play and the Libation-Bearers. In the monologue of the guard who is watching for the beacon signal from Troy we receive a first glimpse of the character of Clytaemestra when he speaks of her as his queen whose ἀνδρόβουλον ἐπιίζον κέαρ (l. 11) now rules. It is she who placed him on the roof of the palace to catch the first sign of the capture of Troy, which will mean the imminent return of the king. The watchman does not dare to speak of his concern for the royal house, but his heart hides a gloomy secret and his hints betray no sympathy with the queen. When the signal is sighted announcing victory to the city of Argos his first reaction after his exaltation about the end of the war is the anticipation of the joy of taking the hand of his master, to whom he seems to be faithfully devoted.

From the parodos which follows we learn more about the part which Agamemnon and his brother Menelaus played in the war. The two are said to hold twin thrones and twin sceptres. Ten years before the opening of the play they had undertaken this war against Troy like "two eagles deprived of their young."¹ The chorus of Argive elders makes it clear that Zeus himself had sent the Atreidae against the son of Priam, and by its words the chorus puts the war guilt upon the Trojans. The Atreidae were acting in defense of their rights, for the abduction of Helen by Paris, the Trojan prince, constituted a violation of the peaceful relations of both kingdoms. More specifically, it is the law of Zeus Xenios

¹For the appropriateness of this metaphor of the eagles as applied to kings, see George Thomson, The Oresteia of Aeschylus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1938), II, 9.

that Paris had violated, and the sons of Atreus were sent by that Zeus to exact retribution. The audience will learn soon, however, that, although the situation of right and wrong thus seems to be rather simple, it was complicated by some guilt of the Atreidae not against Troy but against the members of their own family. But first the old men explain why they as representatives of the people are present at the palace doors. Clytaemestra wants the entire country to celebrate the victory. Her power is reflected by the numerous fires now lighted on the altars of all the gods of the poils¹ and, as they describe 't, it is an alarming demonstration forecasting the even greater display of triumphal festivity with which the queen will welcome the returning king. As it awaits the entrance of Clytaemestra, the thoughts of the chorus go back to the time when the Achaean forces were setting out for Troy from Aulis. As in the Seven against Thebes the king was associated with the seer Tiresias, so here the Elders recall that it was Calchas who then advised the "royal house" (l. 157),² informing the two kings of the sacrifice demanded by Artemis to insure the sailing of the fleet, that is, the death of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon. This brought to the king of Argos a dilemma more dreadful than that faced by Pelasgus in the Suppliants, but the chorus in retrospect is able to summarize the thought process of Agamemnon at that time with almost shocking brevity. It is necessary for the Argive king to choose whether he will become the slayer of his own child or a deserter from his fleet and traitor to his allies. He is described as saying that it is right (θέμις, l. 217) for his comrades to desire virgin blood under these conditions.³ The Elders make it clear in the next strophe that their own idea of θέμις was different from that of their lord on this point and they condemn him for consenting to the murder of his daughter in order to wage a war for the sake of a woman. This last note is sounded again later when the chorus is describing the horrors of war and no doubt reflects the influence of public opinion. The touching picture of the actual sacrifice of Iphigenia suggests too that because of their own love and ad-

¹Chap. 11, p. 29, n. 1.

²Cf. chap. iv, p. 63.

³As Thomson puts it, Oresteia, p. 28, Agamemnon places what he conceives to be his duty to the state before his duty to his family.

miration for the princess they were unable to judge the king's dilemma objectively. Certainly they do not commend him with one word for being first a king and then a father, as they might have done had the war been fought for another cause. It is interesting to note how much more freely and outspokenly the Argives judge the actions of their king than the Persian Pistoï.

The old men's opinion of the activity of the queen is likewise important for us. Immediately before their first words to Clytaemestra there is a much disputed sentence which may refer to her. They say:

πέλοιτο δ' οὖν τὰπὶ τούτοισιν εὖ πράξις, ὥς
θέλει τόδ' ἄγχιστον Ἀ-
πίας γαίης μονόφρουρον ἔρκος [ll. 255-57].

The question is whether the Elders are referring to themselves or to Clytaemestra with these words. Paley¹ prefers the first possibility and translates: "'Such is the wish of those who have the nearest and dearest interest in it, '--who stand,'" he explains, "in the place of its closest relations in the absence of the King, and as members of his boulē, who is the true shepherd and father of his people." In support of this interpretation he cites the Medicean scholium: ἐπειδὴ μόνοι γέροντες ἐφύλαττον τὴν Ἑλλάδα. Smyth,² Sidgwick,³ and Thomson⁴ think that the queen is meant and despite the scholiast this seems more likely if one compares these lines with those accompanying the entrance of Atossa in the Persians (ll. 150 ff.). In fact, the whole scene from the earlier play where the Persian queen first appears before the counsellors provides several points of contrast and comparison with this part of the Agamemnon where the Argive queen has her first conversation with the Elders. The fundamental difference between the two scenes is, of course, the completely unlike characters of the two queens, but the more formal aspects of the two rather similar situations deserve comment. In the first place, it is rather surprising to consider the poet's presentation of the position and attitude of the two groups of old men, the one group the Pistoï of an oriental despot and the other the citizens of an early Greek community. Both groups are conscious of their age, but for

¹Paley, op. cit., p. 367.

²Smyth, Aeschylus, p. 25.

³Sidgwick, Aeschylus, Agamemnon, Part II (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), p. 20.

⁴Thomson, Oresteia, p. 33.

different reasons. The Persians are proud of their high position and feel that they can rightly call themselves "guardians" of the kingdom because of the wisdom that comes with years of experience. The Argives, on the other hand, picture themselves as feeble creatures no longer able to serve in the army and therefore forced to remain at home during the war. There is in the Greek old men a lack of strength and dignity that places them in an unflattering light when judged beside their Persian counterparts, but one must remember that in the Persians the poise of the counsellors was a picturesque element in the magnificence of an eastern court. As we remarked in the previous chapter,¹ the weakness of the Pistoi at the crucial moments in that play was also noticeable. Like the Pistoi the first words of the Argive elders to their queen are very respectful. They begin: "I come, Clytaemestra, revering your power, for it is right to honor the wife of a ruler when the throne of her husband is empty." Note that the homage paid to the Argive queen, like that given to Atossa, is due primarily to her relationship with the male ruler. Then they proceed to ask politely for the meaning of the sacrificial fires. As they question Clytaemestra in order to make certain that her information about the victory over Troy is authentic, the reader senses that although the politeness continues there is an undercurrent of distrust on the part of both the queen and her subjects. The chorus does not hesitate to express its incredulity that the news could come so speedily, and the queen is clearly annoyed by the implications of their doubt. Throughout the scene the chorus maintains a conventional show of respect, but there is no evidence of any personal reverence for the wife of their king, such as that displayed in the Persians. Clytaemestra is well aware of their suspicions about her rule and aside from one brief attempt at diplomacy she makes it clear that she cares little for the opinions of the old men of Argos. How little she cares for the opinions of any of her subjects is illustrated in the course of the drama. In a way she appears to enjoy this interview since it gives her an opportunity to flaunt her superior knowledge about the beacon signals. When the chorus asks for more details of the victory she glibly describes with masculine realism the unpleasant scene in the vanquished city. She adds of her own accord a pious wish

¹Chap. 11, p. 30, n. 1.

that the Argive victors will not desecrate the Trojan altars and ends by voicing the fear that even if there is no sacrilege the woe of those destroyed may be "wakeful." She concludes this recital by saying modestly that these are the words of a mere woman and hopes that everything will turn out well. The chorus, impressed momentarily by this show of piety and wisdom on the part of their queen, tell her that she has spoken like a wise man and they assure her that since she has provided them with such trustworthy proof of the victory it is their duty to offer prayers of thanksgiving to the gods.

In the prayer Zeus is given full credit for the success of the Greek expedition and no mention is made of the part played by the generals. To the minds of the old men the issue of the war is clear: Zeus has exacted vengeance for Paris' sin against the laws of hospitality. As they reflect upon the wantonness of the Trojan prince and the treachery of Helen all their sympathy is with King Menelaus. With deep feeling and insight they describe the grief of the Spartan monarch as he sits in his palace and longs for his lovely though unfaithful wife. But the old men stop short in this reverie to state that it is not only Menelaus who has suffered but also the inhabitants of every Greek home whose men became the victims of Ares in the course of the war. As they picture the god of war as a money-changer dealing in men instead of gold they recall the reaction of various citizens to this slaughter of their men "for the wife of another" (l. 448). The way in which the elders speak of this public feeling of resentment leaves no doubt that the citizens had severely criticized the actions of their king. Note especially the two verbs in the following lines:

ἀλλοτρίας διαί γυναϊκός. τάδε σῖγά τις βαυ-
ζει, φθονερὸν δ' ὅπ' ἄλλος ἔρ-
πει προδίοις Ἀτρείδαις [ll. 448 ff.].

The beginning of the next antistrophe indicates that they consider public opinion something to be reckoned with, for they say:

βαρεῖα δ' ἄστυν φάτις σὺν κότῳ·
δημοκράντου δ' ἄρ' αὖ τίθει χρέος [ll. 456 f.].¹

¹Paley, *op. cit.*, p. 383, quotes a similar passage from the *Eumenides*, 379 f., and explains: "The poet's doctrine was, that popular dissatisfaction was one cause of the ruin of a kingly house." He explains line 457 by saying: "The meaning is, that the just indignation of the people calls forth the anger of the gods against the Atridae as much as a formal curse would have done."

After these gloomy forebodings there is an epode of a lighter nature wherein the old men return to their former doubts about the authenticity of the queen's news, referring with typical masculine satisfaction to feminine credulity. Their speculations along these lines are interrupted by a herald who comes from the Greek army. For the first time in the play someone appears who has been in contact with Agamemnon during his long absence and his words concerning his king are therefore of especial value. All the commentators on this play are delighted with the rôle of the herald, for he is an outstandingly real character; so we are interested in his estimate of his general and monarch. As soon as he has completed his invocations to the gods he greets the "halls of the kings, the dear roofs, the revered thrones and the divinities" before the palace, and he bids them receive their king with "gladsome eyes." His ten-line tribute to the king is so sincere and so vivid that it must be quoted in full:

ἦκει γὰρ ὅμῃν φῶς ἐν εὐφρόνῃ φέρων
καὶ τοῖσδ' ἅπασιν κοινὸν Ἀγαμέμνων ἄναξ.
ἀλλ' εὖ νῦν ἀσπᾶσασθε, καὶ γὰρ οὖν πρέπει,
Τροίαν κατασκάψαντα τοῦ δικηφόρου
Διὸς μακέλλῃ, τῇ κατείργασται πέδον,
[βωμοὶ δ' αἵστοι καὶ θεῶν ἰδρύματα]
καὶ σπέρμα πάσης ἐξαπόλυται χθονός.
τοιόνδε Τροίαι περιβαλὼν ζευκτῆριον
ἄναξ Ἀτρεΐδης πρέσβυς εὐδαίμων ἀνὴρ
ἦκει, τίεσθαι δ' ἄξιωτατος βροτῶν
τῶν νῦν [ll. 522 ff.].

This is actually the only encomium of a living king that we find in the extant text of Aeschylus. The only other extensive praise of a ruler is the Persian counsellors' glorification of the dead Darius. The two laudations have one point in common: the praise accorded to both kings is based on their success. Agamemnon must have won the respect of his soldiers, at least if we can assume that the messenger represents in his own warm tone the estimate of the army. Unlike the elders the messenger attributes the overthrow of the enemy city to his king alone. The old men had paid no tribute to their monarch's military ability when they first heard the news but referred the entire victory to divine vengeance. The messenger, on the other hand, makes no particular mention of the part of the gods in the expedition even when he greets their shrines. Perhaps his is a less religious nature than that of the elders and no doubt his admiration for Agamemnon is a result of his having witnessed the king's valor and efficiency in the field.

The last two lines quoted seem like the words of an oriental subject, but their chief function in the drama is probably not so much to characterize Agamemnon as to foreshadow indirectly the tragic welcome that the conqueror actually received. There can be no doubt that to the messenger his king is a hero, and he thinks it only fitting that his fellow citizens should share his enthusiasm for their "common" lord. There is no implication on his part that the war should not have been undertaken. He is, in fact, a little surprised that the land longed so for the absent army. After assuring the old men that the soldiers and their leaders had to pay for their victory by toil and hardship he proposes a fitting dedication for the spoils taken from Troy as a permanent glorification of the Argive victors. His last words are typical of his attitude. He says that it will be necessary for those who hear of their triumph to praise "the city and its generals," and finally he adds that thanks will be given to Zeus as well (ll. 580 ff.).

At this point Clytaemestra appears and her speech to the messenger is completely self-centred. She gives him no word of welcome and offers him no opportunity to address her, for she says that she can learn everything from the king. With some contempt she refers to the doubts of those who had not believed her account of the beacon signals. She bids the messenger tell the king to return as soon as possible to his city and his faithful wife. The frankness of this avowal of fidelity is most unqueenly, as are most of the outbursts of the Argive queen. Clytaemestra herself seems to feel that her words need some justification, for as she leaves she tells them that "such a boast, filled with truth, is not a shameful thing for a noble woman to utter" (ll. 613 f.).¹

The old men are not at all impressed by this speech and warn the messenger ambiguously that her words need correct interpretation, but they say no more for the time being. Their next inquiry of the messenger concerns the other king of the Greek expedition, Menelaus, whom they refer to as τῆσδε γῆς φίλον κράτος (l. 619). We have remarked previously about the sympathy of the chorus for the deserted Spartan king, which reflects in a way

¹Smyth, Aeschylus, and Thomson, Oresteia, pp. 71 ff., assign these two lines to the messenger.

their hatred for his queen. It is immediately following the messenger's sad news about the disappearance of Menelaus that the chorus begins its etymological reflections on the name "Helen." This is the beginning of the chorus that prepares the way for the entrance of the triumphant king. It is just before Agamemnon appears that the old men speak their famous strophe on hybris and Atē. As the old men remark that Dikē favors the poor and good man but spurns the homes of the evil and rich because she does not revere wealth, the king and his retinue including Cassandra are approaching. The greeting given the monarch by the elders is very interesting and very Greek. They hail him as king, sacker of Troy and son of Atreus, and ask themselves and him how best they can extend their greeting to him in such a way as to have it neither too effusive nor too indifferent. The fear displayed by the Persian Pistoi in the presence of King Darius is entirely absent from the Argive elders. It would not have occurred to the Persians that they could be too extreme in their homage. The old men of Argos not only make it a point of tempering their welcome but also allow themselves to indulge in some general speculations about the sincerity of mankind. What they have in mind is, of course, the hypocrisy that Agamemnon is about to face in his own wife. Their next specific point is important, since it seems to involve what these old men consider one of the requisites for being a good ruler. They say that "whoever is a good προβαταγωγὸν cannot be unaware of a lack of loyalty among those around them. Herodotus and Xenophon were also interested in the ability of kings to judge men, for this ability is in the last analysis second in importance to none of the necessary characteristics of any ruler in any age. In one way or another it has been one of the chief tasks of every ruler we have studied to judge the sincerity of the person or persons with whom he must deal. Pelasgus took great pains to assure himself of the character of the Danaids; Zeus had to decide for himself that his prime minister was not to be trusted; Eteocles had to know well each of the six men he was sending to the Theban gates; even the despot Xerxes was ruined because he was unable to detect the guile of the Greek spy sent to him by Themistocles. The question is here rather why the chorus saw fit to say this to their king immediately upon his arrival. Certainly they were not confident that he was so astute that he could not be deceived by the queen and her lover. If the

statement was meant to convey a warning to the king it was badly timed and too vaguely expressed. The king indicates in his first speech that he is too overwhelmed with the joy and pride of his triumphal homecoming to take any immediate precautions. The chorus proves its sincerity, to its own satisfaction, at least, by telling the king how severely he had been criticized in the past for allowing so many men to die in battle, but they assure him that now that he has returned a victor the suffering entailed has turned out satisfactorily. They finish the greeting by hinting that all has not been perfect in his absence but that he will discover by investigation who of those governing during the long years was just and who was not. The nature of this welcome is such that anyone not quite preoccupied with himself would have sensed that something was very wrong in the kingdom. There is no tone of exultation in their words, nothing that would have really assured the king of the appreciation or approval of his subjects. It is rather strange that a chorus which will later mourn its ruler after his murder indicates no personal affection for him on the occasion of his return after ten years. The reply of Agamemnon to this most unusual greeting is no different in this respect, for he too makes no attempt to display any feeling of regard for the elders.

The king is careful to follow the convention of greeting first his land and the gods, thanking them for his return and for their assistance in the campaign. It would be inconceivable for a Greek military leader to have omitted this formality, but the Argive king reflects even in his words of thanksgiving a definitely self-reliant attitude as far as the gods are concerned. He gives as the chief reason for thanking them the fact that they permitted him to wreak a just vengeance upon his enemy. Instead of talking in any detail about the gods themselves he describes the ruin which he brought upon Troy. Although he says that for this victory it is necessary to pay the gods *πολύμνηστον χάριν* (l. 821), the reader suspects that Agamemnon is as much impressed with his own part in the success of the expedition as he is with the practical aid of the divinities. His mind is filled with the scene of his triumph. As if in answer to the complaints mentioned by the elders he too refers to the war as one fought "on account of a woman," but there is no apology in his use of the phrase. With great satisfaction he pictures the Argive force as a savage lion

lapping up the "blood of tyrants" (l. 828). He seems to feel that his appreciation of the gods has been rather lengthy and he hastens to assure the elders that he has not forgotten the matters which they mentioned to him. He agrees heartily with their opinion that men are not always sincere. In fact, he speaks of such considerations with a tone of authority and insists that he understands this characteristic of mankind well as a result of his own recent experience. He states that of all the men at Troy Odysseus alone was truly loyal and helpful. This last statement is scarcely the magnanimous utterance of a conquering hero, but it is entirely in keeping with Agamemnon's self-satisfaction. The implication is that in spite of a lack of cooperation on the part of his fellow generals he was able to win the war.

It is the next part of Agamemnon's reply to the old men which gives one of the few clues to the actual administration of the government in Argos under this king. He says:

τὰ δ' ἄλλα πρὸς πόλιν τε καὶ θεοῦς
κοινοῦς ἄγῳνας θέντες ἐν πανηγύρει
βουλευσόμεσθα [ll. 844 ff.].

We note that, as always, the city and the gods are thought of as one, but what interests us even more is that the lines imply that the business of the kingdom is carried on in a general assembly.¹ How far this body resembled the ordinary Homeric agora it is impossible to determine from this one reference but it is significant that that particular ruler who appears somewhat autocratic makes it clear that matters of state are to be planned not by himself alone, but in consultation with the citizens. When one remembers that this is the same kingdom over which Pelasgus, the strictly constitutional monarch, ruled he is ready to believe that the poet did not want to represent Agamemnon as a mere autocrat and the words κοινοῦς ἄγῳνας θέντες do suggest that there will be a free discussion of the competing opinions on political and religious affairs. This suggestion is more in line with the time of Aeschylus than with the age described by Homer, for the words imply not a single Thersites as critic, whose mouth is

¹The word πανηγυρίς means a gathering of all the people especially in connection with festivals. The poet here uses the poetic word in order to indicate the political gathering of the entire people. This must have meant something like the ecclesia or the earlier agora, which is derived from the same stem. The deliberate use of this word indicates that the entire people is meant and not the senate.

closed by the blow of the sceptre, but general debate. That there was also a senate under the system is revealed by Clytaemestra in line 884. The two passages supplement each other and nowhere in Aeschylus is there a more complete picture of the entire political organization. Even in the Suppliants, where Aeschylus pays so much attention to the legal procedure by which a decision of the state about war and peace is made, there is no trace of this differentiation of king, senate and assembly. The poet could be referring to Homer where there is the distinction of boulē and agora, but the importance of the functions of those two Homeric bodies was very different in the Aeschylean period. In her speech Clytaemestra appears to consider seriously what she calls a "public anarchy" which might overthrow the boulē. This is far from the Homeric conditions. It involves a rebellious assembly which may try to seize power and make its decisions over the head of the more authoritative senate.

In this section Aeschylus outlines with sovereign brevity but without omitting anything the essential ergon of a ruler which Agamemnon by the μέν--δέ construction divides into two main functions (ll. 844 ff.). First, it must be the object of a wise government to see to it that whatever is sound (τὸ μέν καλῶς ἔχον) and corresponds to the norm within the state is preserved and made permanent, but there are other aspects of the life of a community which are in need of remedies, and this involves the second function of the ruler. The metaphor of an illness (νόσος) to describe the political evils undermining the health of the polis had been used since the days of Solon¹ and probably even earlier. Aeschylus works out the picture by making Agamemnon say that he will try to avert the sufferings of social illness by burning or cutting εὐφρόνας, that is to say, with the good intention of the physician who applies both methods, not like a tyrant, in order to inflict damage upon other beings for selfish reasons, but for their own good. The comparison of the government of the state to the work of the physician seems to presuppose an organic idea of political life. It becomes frequent in Plato's philosophy, as may be shown by passages in the first book of the Republic and in the Gorgias.² In the earlier of these works politics is compared

¹Solon 3. 17 (Diehl).

²Plato Republic 1, 341 C ff.; Gorgias 464 B ff.

to medicine and Plato there distinguishes two parts of political activity: that concerned with the life of the just citizen and the other dealing with injustice. The latter part is compared to medicine since the administration of justice has to cure the social malady. The examples of burning and cutting occur often in the philosophical discussions of the medical aspect of the art of government. The work of the physician also illustrates better than that of anyone else the combination of methods which are usually taken as a sign of force with the salutary purpose of healing. In the Republic the same feature is stressed through the same comparison of the ruler and the physician, and it is stated that the true physician can never misuse his power to the disadvantage of the patient because it is essential to his art that it serve only the patient's good. In the same way Plato thinks the true ruler will use his power only to the advantage of those entrusted to him. Agamemnon has given an ideal description of the ruler¹ in these lines and it is entirely fitting (prepon) on this occasion where he makes his first speech to his subjects after his return from a victorious war. Whether he would have lived up to this ideal had he survived is a question that the poet does not want us to ask. Aeschylus here at least gives the reader no reason to doubt the sincerity of the Argive king and does not hesitate to entrust to him what must have been his own concept of a good ruler.

The appearance of Clytaemestra, which coincides with the end of this speech of the king, makes accessible to the audience a scene which shows the king and queen face to face and thereby makes a decisive contribution to their characterization by means of contrast. So far Agamemnon was presented by his own official speech only, which revealed the merely formal aspects of his position. They make him comparable to the more typical representation of the constitutional king in the Suppliants and the soldier-king in the Seven. As the tragic problem of this king is fundamentally a human and personal one, Aeschylus takes this opportu-

¹One may ask if the words βουλευτέον and πειρασόμεσθα refer to the action of the king alone or imply the cooperation of the people as suggested in the preceding words. The question must be decided in the second sense because of the analogy of πειρασόμεσθα with βουλευσόμεσθα, where the cooperation of king and people is clearly meant.

nity to develop the general features into a more psychological portrait of Agamemnon's complete situation. But, even so, the poet does not lose sight of the fact that both the characters are royal personalities. Clytaemestra makes her welcome to her husband a part of a public address to the citizens. Her speech takes the form of a dēmēgoria beginning with the words ἄνδρες πολῖται (l. 855) and taking the chorus of the old men as representative of the Argive people. As at her first appearance she had given public assurance of her conjugal fidelity in a public declaration, so she puts the outburst of her joy over her husband's return in the same public form. She stresses her unusual lack of restraint as a symptom of her love. The requirements of royal etiquette are thus taken as a pretext to avoid a true encounter of wife and husband. She fills the address with a description of the perils which threatened her person and régime during the long absence of the ruler. She explains that Orestes, the crown prince, is not present on this occasion for political reasons, since Strophius, their ally, had warned her not to expose the heir to the throne to the danger of a revolutionary upheaval that might overthrow the rule of the senate and thereby the dynasty itself. She thus diplomatically conceals her intention of removing this most important witness from the scene by her affected concern for his safety. Against this political background she puts her praise of the king who has returned as the savior of his country. The hymn-like predications that she dedicates to him, all of which vary the theme of the light that appears in darkness, are so exaggerated and in such poor taste that even Agamemnon rejects them. Her remark, "Absit invidia," makes the reader feel all the more the inevitability of just such an effect.

The climax of her speech is the scene with the purple carpet that she orders the servants to spread out before the conqueror. The king's reply to his wife is really a reproof, for he feels obliged to deprecate the pomp of her rhetorical praise which, he says, is in proportion to the length of his absence and would have more weight if bestowed on him by others (ll. 914 ff.). The inappropriateness of the queen's words not only hurts his aesthetic sense. He feels that they were more like the compliments of a woman or the servile homage of a barbarian (ll. 918-19). Even more invidious for him is the idea of setting foot on the purple, for that is the honor attributed to a god; he wants to be

revered not as a god but as a man. The poet who, as a contemporary of the Persian Wars, had portrayed in his Persians the god-like position of the oriental monarch makes his Greek king feel consciously the difference of his purely human concept of kingship and express it by the comparison with the way an eastern prince is worshipped by his subjects (l. 935). To him as a Greek this oriental submission is a transgression of the boundaries of human nature and therefore hybris.

In Homer and Hesiod hybris is still simply the opposite of dikē, that is, an unjust deed. It does not mean a permanent attitude of the mind and does not have the solemn overtones which it has at the time of Aeschylus, Sophocles and Herodotus. By that time it is something different: it is applied principally and with specific religious meaning to the relationship of man and deity. A man who transgresses the limits of the human sphere in thought or action thereby commits hybris. The word is hardly translatable in this sense. It constitutes a violation of the unshakable measures and proportions of the divine cosmos and this is what the Delphic gnōmē, γνῶσις σεαυτὸν, warns against. Therefore, scholars have connected this development of the concept of hybris with the ethical code of the religion of the Delphic Apollo.¹ This specifically Greek idea, the opposite of which is found in sōphrosynē rather than in dikē, pervades the thought of Aeschylus and Pindar and their contemporaries. The Agamemnon of Aeschylus sees his ideal of kingship in this light and contrasts it with the oriental one in order to make it clear. We have seen before that he thinks of royal power as limited politically through other constitutional factors, but this limitation is more than a political one in the carpet scene. There it flows from a religious source, for the king proclaims his belief that god looks with a gracious eye from afar upon a king who rules μαλακῶς (l. 951). This means the same as the πραότης of political government which is praised not only by the representatives of Athenian democracy in the classical period, but is often connected with the rule of kings. Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle recommend this mild form of government to the tyrants of their time and intend by it to change their rule into a more constitutional system. Agamemnon is the only living king in Aeschylus to express such

¹See Jaeger, Paideia, p. 166.

ideas. Apparently his fear of committing hybris is based on the awareness that a powerful ruler is exposed by his very position to the danger of succumbing to it. The violation of human measure is in his eyes a characteristic of oriental despotism. The poet who makes him put himself against this background is the same artist who set forth the identity of oriental despotism and hybris in the figure of Xerxes in the Persians. There the young monarch appears as the victim of this sin, whereas Darius, the old king, warns against it; but from Agamemnon's point of view Xerxes is the more typical embodiment of eastern tyranny because he commits hybris. It is an interesting feature of the Agamemnon that the ruler there keeps within certain boundaries not only for reasons of strict legality, like Pelasgus in the Suppliants, but out of the religious attitude involved in this ethics of rulership, which also appears, like the legality of Pelasgus, as specifically Greek.

The Cassandra episode, which shifts from the political to the dimension of the daemonic, makes no contribution to our problem, but the last scene of the drama is not unimportant. There the queen who has slain the king boldly announces her deed to the chorus (ll. 1372 ff.). The elders in this scene more than anywhere else represent the Argive people, and they are addressed by Clytaemestra, as in the public speech at the king's reception (l. 855), as πρέσβος Ἀργείων τόδε (l. 1393). The question might be raised whether the chorus is just a symbolic representation of all the people or whether theirs is an especially distinguished position in the kingdom. The fact that they are only twelve in number is not decisive. One might be inclined to interpret their words, "Let us enter into deliberation" (κοινωνώμεθ' ἄνδρες ἄσφαλῃ βουλευμάτων, l. 1347), spoken just after they had heard the shouts of the king, as the words of the members of a boulē, and understand the queen's form of address in the same way, especially since it is used twice as a kind of formula. In the Persians also the word πρέσβεις is used by the king where he bids farewell to the Pistoi, the members of the crown council (l. 840). The word πρέσβος is used by the Pistoi themselves in addressing the queen mother (l. 623). So in the Agamemnon Clytaemestra's phrase need not mean only old men but may signify an honorary status. It is true that Aeschylus did not give the title a more distinct relief, as he does in the first words of the earlier play. He was content to present the old men of Argos as an outstanding element

of the population. They are conscious throughout of the dangers confronting the royal house, and in the last scene they become active to a certain degree when the crime of the queen compels them to take a stand whatever be their actual power. In their deliberation each of the twelve is given two lines and each of them expresses his opinion (γνώμην). Their views differ from the extreme of a passive acknowledgment of the new situation as an accomplished fact to active intervention by force and their pronouncements are described as a sort of voting (ψηφίζομαι, l. 1353). The situation created by the murder of the king arouses not only their human but even their political feelings. They see in the murder an overturn of the legal power, which confirms our interpretation of Agamemnon's rule, and the establishment of a tyrannic régime (ll. 1354-55). The evidence of the facts, the fourth speaker declares, foreshadows a dictatorship and, whereas the seventh remarks sceptically that no one could awaken the dead, the ninth declares that he would rather die than endure this shameful rule.

The same attitude of the chorus prevails in the following and final scene, where they attack the queen as she leaves the palace to announce the death of the king and to justify her action before the people. The old men threaten her with the curse of the people and exile (ll. 1410-11). Such a curse as the solemn expression of the hatred of the citizens is not only a symptom of strong human feelings but in the ancient polis where criminal law is sacred law it implies an act of popular justice. The queen denies the right of the old men to make this condemnation. Her word δικάζεις is taken up by δικάστῃς (l. 1421) and thus the dispute is understood by the queen as a political act which threatens her attempt to take over the power of the murdered king. Earlier in the play (l. 883) she had had to fear lest the people overthrow the senate; now the elders threaten to expel her. That this is not meant as a complete dissolution of the dynasty is shown by the later reference of the chorus to Orestes. The dangers by which we saw the throne of Argos surrounded from the beginning of the play have come true, and in this scene we see the dynasty in the moment of a revolutionary crisis. There is no real outbreak of revolution because those in power are too strong to be attacked, and that is the comparative truth of what one of the old men had said when he advised his fellows to recognize ac-

complished facts. Although the queen tries to justify her act by legal reasons it is clear from the beginning that she does not care at all what the people think and is ready to counteract any opposition by force. The chorus boldly spurns her defense. They not only voice their deep sympathy with their slain monarch, but even declare that no witness will swear that the queen was innocent (l. 1505). They recognize the existence of the old curse menacing the family of the Atreidae with destruction and they recognize the cooperation of Atē in the present catastrophe, but they insist that the ghost of revenge (ἰλδοστωρ) has only given assistance to the deed which after all remains hers. In the long and embittered altercation which follows the queen makes the most of this seeming concession of the chorus, but the old men charge her with full responsibility for her action in spite of their recognition of the tragic concatenation of the present crime with the tragic heritage of the royal house.

The political attitude of the chorus is a well-balanced combination of perfect loyalty to the dynasty as such and to the person of the dead king and a condemnation and abhorrence of the act by which the present representatives of the dynasty acquired their illegal power. They finally see that they cannot intervene actively and cannot even give Agamemnon honorable burial since the queen insists on the right to bury him as she slew him, but ideally the chorus establishes once more the validity of the age-old law τὸν ὀφείσαντα παθεῖν even though they cannot put it into effect now. Thus they stress the illegal character of the new régime the dawn of which the poet lets us see at the end of this first play of the trilogy. This impression is accentuated by the appearance of Aegisthus, who tries at first to come to the aid of Clytaemestra by new arguments proving the justice of their common cause and connecting the murder with the distress inflicted on his father Thyestes by Atreus. The chorus abruptly interprets his words as a confession of deliberate murder and threatens him with death by stoning. He recurs to threats of force declaring that he will tame the people by tyrannic methods. The old men recognize his intention, but find it hard to believe that a coward who did not dare to commit the murder with his own hand would be fit for the rôle of tyrant which he chooses. He replies that he will try to rule the citizens by means of Agamemnon's power (χρήματα), which he takes over from the dead king. The end of the play

leaves us with the impression of potential revolution. The quarrel remains undecided, but it is only postponed. The mention of Orestes as the legitimate heir to the throne and his possible return foreshadows another catastrophe by which the present tyranny will be overturned.

It is in this light that we approach the Libation-Bearers. The play is at once an individual human tragedy and the political tragedy of a country, and the poet does not lose sight of the coincidence of these two aspects. What we call the political side of it does not develop into a revolution but is contained rather in the curse of the murder of the king and in the pollution brought by it upon the polis. When Orestes returns from exile in order to take revenge upon his mother and seize power in obedience to the order of the Delphic god, whose law requires retaliation, he does not commit a mere act of revenge. At the same time he restores the legitimate rule. He comes as the liberator of his country from tyranny (l. 973). In the long speech that he makes to the people after the murder of Clytaemestra he justifies his act in the same way as his mother had tried to defend herself in the parallel scene of the Agamemnon. After stating the despotic character of the rule of the two murderers, he reminds the chorus of the cruel and inhuman way they had accomplished their crime and states his right and obligation to kill the queen. The chorus solemnly acknowledges his deed as legitimate and greets him as the liberator of the state of Argos. The legal character of Orestes' revenge is emphasized throughout the play, and this is particularly fitting since the act was connected so closely with the political problem of his succession and the restoration of the old legitimate kingdom in place of the present rule of force. These are the last shadows of the problem of the ruler and his catastrophe as raised by the first play of the trilogy. However, the farther we proceed in the second play the more the human situation of the young prince who fulfills the duty of avenging his father and at the same time assumes the whole burden of the ancestral curse and becomes himself its victim attracts our attention. Before Orestes becomes a ruler himself he is driven from the country to which he had just returned by the Furies. He is not a ruler-like figure in these circumstances, nor do we see him in that rôle in the Eumenides, where he is acquitted by the Athenian Areopagus. What he will be after his return to Argos lies beyond the trilogy.

APPENDIX

TERMS APPLIED TO THE RULER

It is remarkable that the words "king," "royal" and "kingdom" are not used by Aeschylus in connection with the rule of Zeus in the Prometheus, whereas he uses βασιλεύς, βασιλείος, and βασιλεία in all the other plays in which royalty appears except the Suppliants. There the chorus asks Pelasgus whether it is to consider him as an ἔτης (which seems to mean δημότης), τηρός ἱεροῦ ῥάβδος, or πόλεως ἄγός (l. 248).¹ The latter word leaves open all possibilities. Although in Homer the ἄγοί were the Greek leaders and "kings" in later periods it could refer to almost any of the archontes. Pelasgus is called ἀρχηγέτης by himself and Danaus, but he is normally spoken of as ἄναξ unless his title is paraphrased by the chorus in more general terms, and this is the title of the Homeric kings also. In the passage where the suppliants want to stress their opinion that the king is not responsible to the assembly it calls him πρύτανις (l. 371), a word that is used of Zeus in Prometheus (l. 169). The only passage in the Prometheus where the word βασιλικός appears is line 869, but there it is not the rule of Zeus that is meant. It refers there to the "royal" dynasty of Argos that is to be descended from Io. In the Suppliants the fact that the royal title is replaced by other words is to be explained by the tendency of the poet to make his setting appropriately archaic. The absence of the word "king" in Prometheus, however, must have something to do with the poet's intention to picture Zeus as a lawless tyrant. The fact is all the more significant because the title Ζεὺς βασι-

¹This is the text in the edition of Wilamowitz which is also approved by Vürtheim who only adds a comma after ἱεροῦ and ῥαβδόν. Although it is by no means certain that the words τηρός and ῥαβδός can really have the meaning ascribed to them by these editors it is at least possible and therefore preferable to changing the text as Smyth and others do. The only change required is to understand ἱεροῦ as ἱεροῦ which is a normal etacism and in reality no alteration of the text.

λεύς was common among the Greeks and does occur in other tragedies of Aeschylus, for example, Agamemnon, 355, Suppliants, 296.

One of the titles given to Zeus by Prometheus is τᾱγός (ὁ νέος τᾱγός μακάρων, l. 96). Aeschylus has a preference for this word when speaking of men in positions of command. It is found three times in the Persians: once it is used of the vassal kings (l. 23); in the other two passages (ll. 324, 480) it means the commanders of the ships. In the Agamemnon the two kings Menelaus and Agamemnon are called "τᾱγὰ of the Greek youth" (l. 110). In all these instances the word means military leaders or "dukes." In the Prometheus, however, it is used of the ruler in the realm of the gods. In that play it cannot have the military connotation but seems rather to stress the unlimited power of the ruler.

As observed previously τᾱγός is of Thessalian origin. It is best known from Xenophon's Hellenica vi. l. 8, where it is said that in 374 B.C. Jason of Pherae explained to Polydamas of Larisa his plan of being elected τᾱγός Θεσσαλῶν ἀπάντων, that is, he wanted to be the highest leader, in the political and military sense, of all the local powers in Thessaly. The word occurs elsewhere in Xenophon; the passages are collected by Eduard Meyer,¹ who tries to trace back the existence of such a political position in Thessalian history and rightly rejects the theory of Hiller v. Gärtringen,² who had reached the conclusion that the unified Thessalian state and the institution of the τᾱγός had been created by Jason in the fourth century. When speaking of the Thessalian rulers it is true that Herodotus and Thucydides do not mention a τᾱγός, but even Aristotle in his Politics does not use the word in connection with Thessalian political conditions although he was writing at a time when the τᾱγός undoubtedly existed. All these historical writers have replaced the local term by more common Greek words for ruler. That there was a τᾱγός in Thessaly as early as the fifth century is proved by a bronze inscription, IG, ix, 2, 257, cited by Meyer (p. 232), who comments on the phrase κέν τᾱγῶ κέν ἀταγία which distinguishes periods when there is a τᾱγός from others when there is no τᾱγός in that part of Greece. Meyer thinks there must have been such an office in Thes-

¹Theopomps Hellenika (Halle a. S.: Niemeyer, 1909), pp. 220 ff.

²Cited ibid., p. 237.

saly during the sixth and fifth centuries. He traces the Thessalian dukes to the year 586 B.C., more than a century before Aeschylus wrote the dramas in which the word *ταγός* appears for the first time in Greek literature. That he is the first one to use this title is interesting and perhaps not sufficiently appreciated by Meyer's learned discussion of the problem. He writes (in footnote 2, p. 237) that the word *ταγός* "also" occurs in Greek tragedy.

In *Iliad* xxiii. 160 the word *ταγοί* was read by Aristarchus. If this were correct the entire picture would be changed, but modern critical commentators deny for metrical reasons the existence of the word in Homer and read *τ' ἄγοι*. The appearance of the word in Delphi where it is the title of the officials of the phratry of the Labyades is correctly explained by Swoboda¹ as Thessalian influence. Thus Aeschylus is in reality the first literary witness. Since he has the word five times he seems to consider it a colorful synonym for the concept of ruler. It is not clear which contemporary experience brought Thessalian political conditions to his attention but there certainly must have been one. From the point of view of the historian this involves an interesting problem. The use of *ταγός* in the other tragic poets is imitation of Aeschylus for he has given it a place in the tragic vocabulary. Several specific features of Aeschylus' description of Thrace in the *Persians* (11.867-872)² seem to suggest that they are based on personal observation of the northern countries. This would imply the poet's participation in the movement of the Athenian troops at that time. But even without this military adventure it would not be impossible for him to have some information about Thessaly and the existence there of an independent ruler called *ταγός*. The use which he made of it is an additional proof of the thesis of this study that contemporary political experience has contributed much to the poet's characters and dramatic situation.

¹Cited *ibid.*, p. 237, n. 2.

²Cf. Herodotus v. 16, and Wilamowitz, *ad loc.*

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